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(54) **MICROCLIMATE CONTROL SYSTEMS AND METHODS**

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Related U.S. Application Data

(63) Continuation of application No. 15/634,027, filed on Jun. 27, 2017, now Pat. No. 10,433,646, which is a continuation-in-part of application No. 14/727,398, filed on Jun. 1, 2015, now Pat. No. 10,614,694, said application No. 15/634,027 is a continuation-in-part of application No. 15/170,550, filed on Jun. 1, 2016, now Pat. No. 9,955,318.

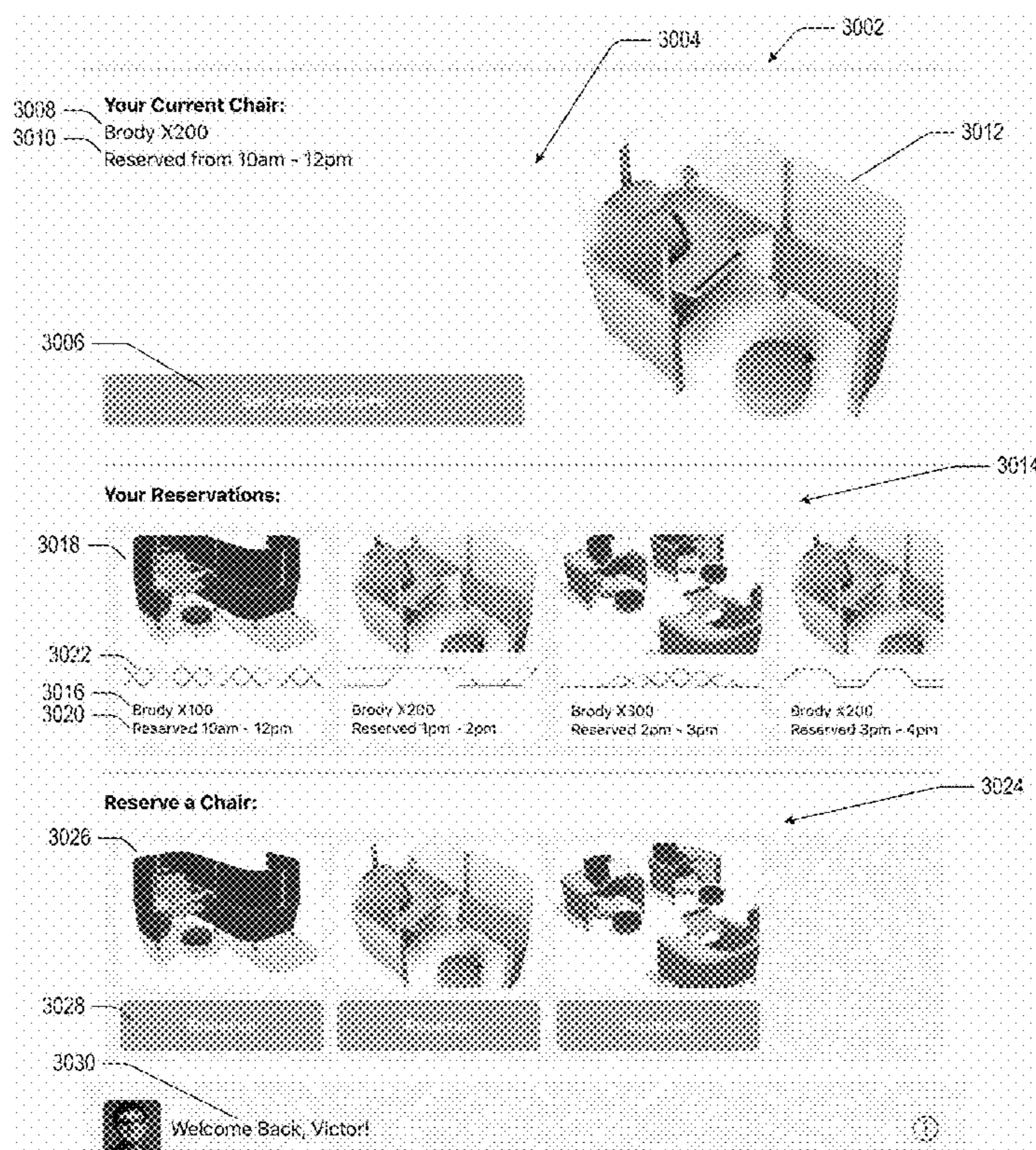
(60) Provisional application No. 62/355,167, filed on Jun. 27, 2016, provisional application No. 62/008,723, filed on Jun. 6, 2014, provisional application No. 62/040,485, filed on Aug. 22, 2014, provisional application No. 62/106,040, filed on Jan. 21, 2015, provisional application No. 62/171,401, filed on Jun. 5, 2015.

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A47B 97/00 (2006.01)
A47C 21/04 (2006.01)
(52) **U.S. Cl.**
CPC *A47C 7/74* (2013.01); *G05B 15/02* (2013.01); *A47C 21/04* (2013.01); *A47C 1/143* (2013.01); *A47B 97/00* (2013.01); *A47C 9/00* (2013.01)

(57) **ABSTRACT**

A method and system for temperature control of a microclimate device are disclosed. The temperature control can be integrated into a reservation system for the microclimate device. A user interface can receive a user input of a temperature control setting. The user interface can be integrated into the microclimate device. A processor can receive the user input and control a heating and/or cooling device to execute the temperature control setting.



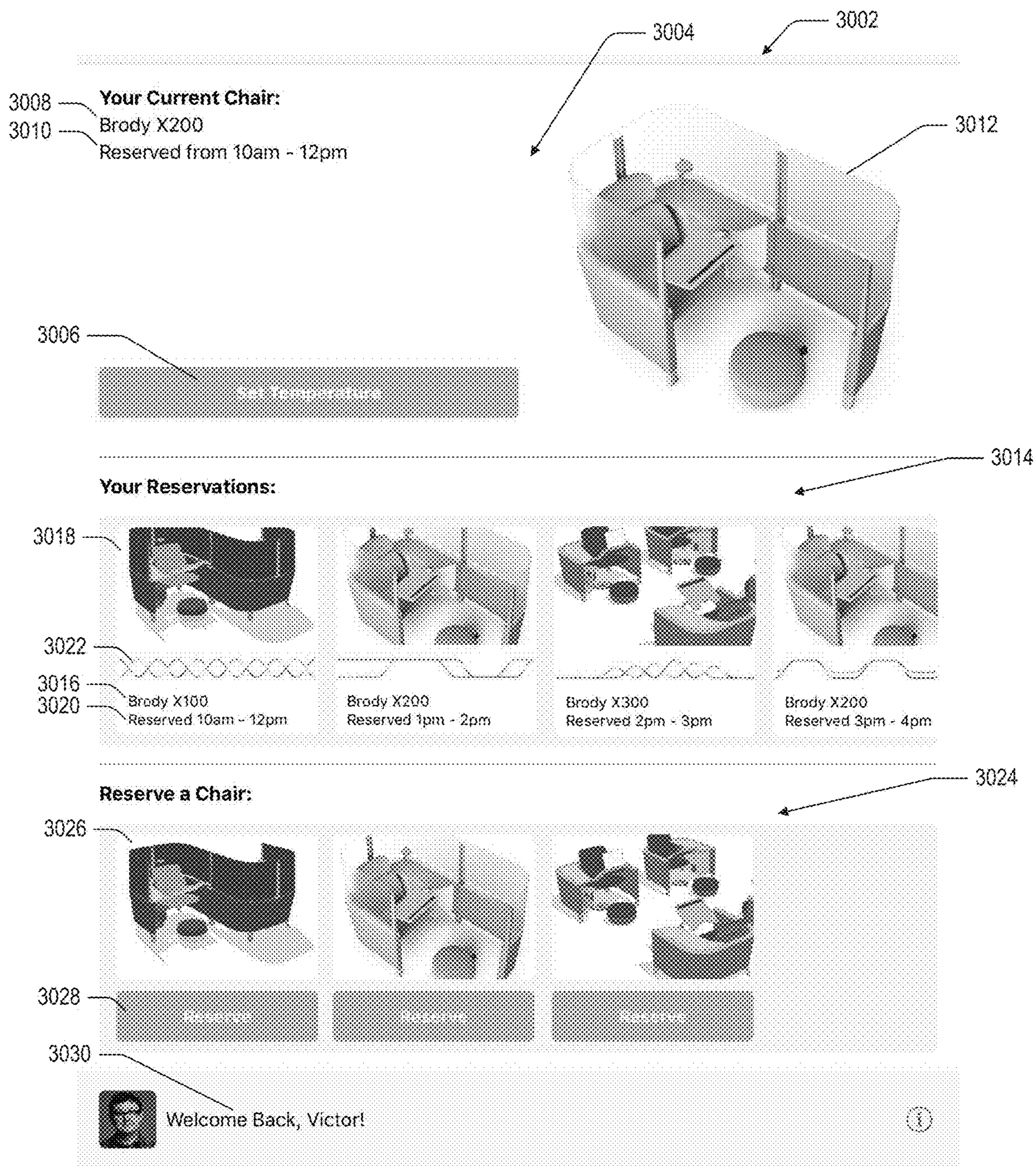


Fig. 1

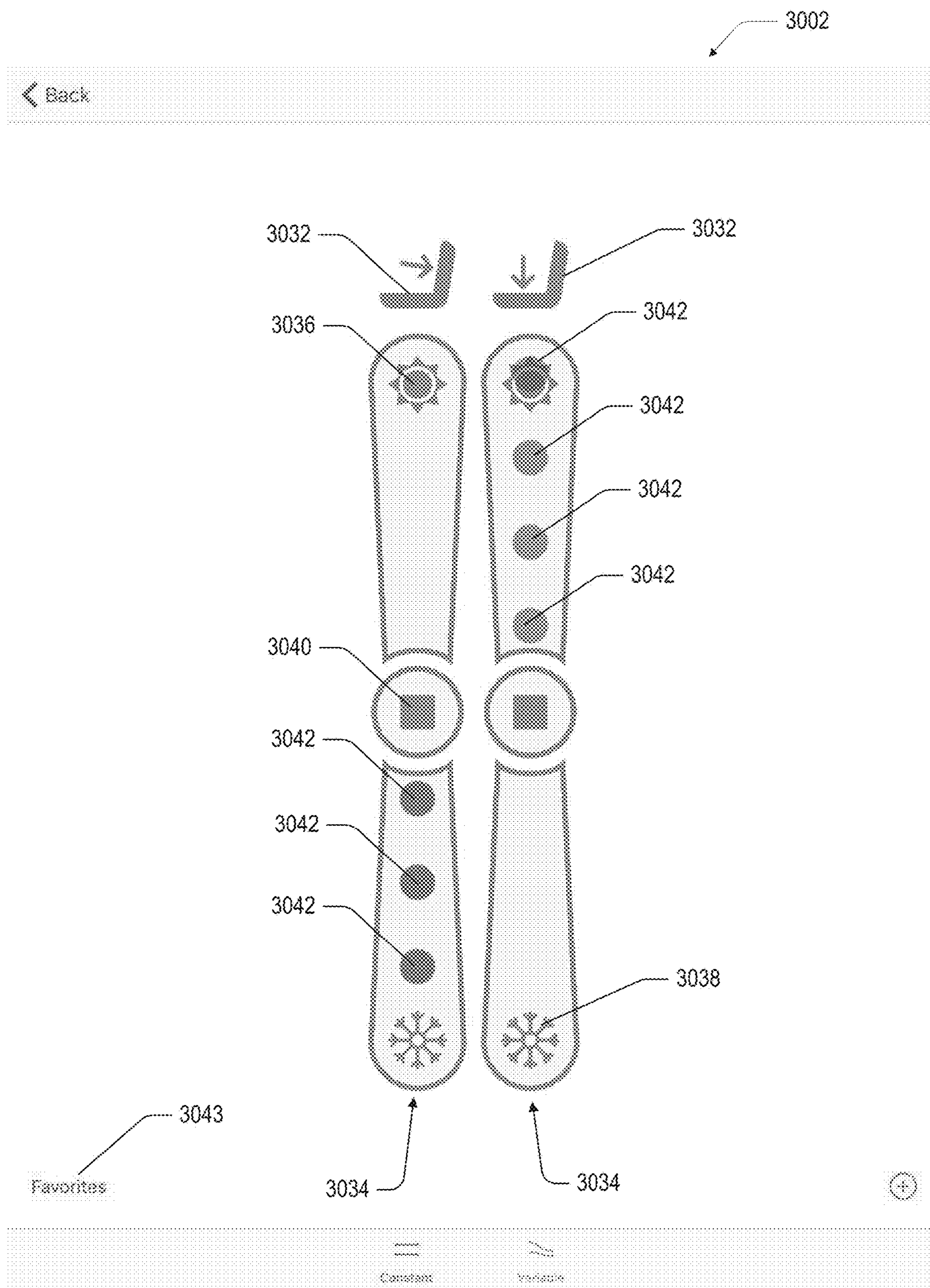


Fig. 2

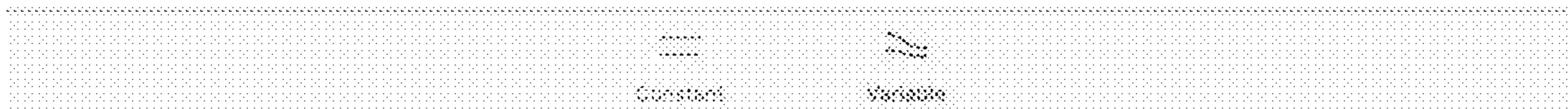
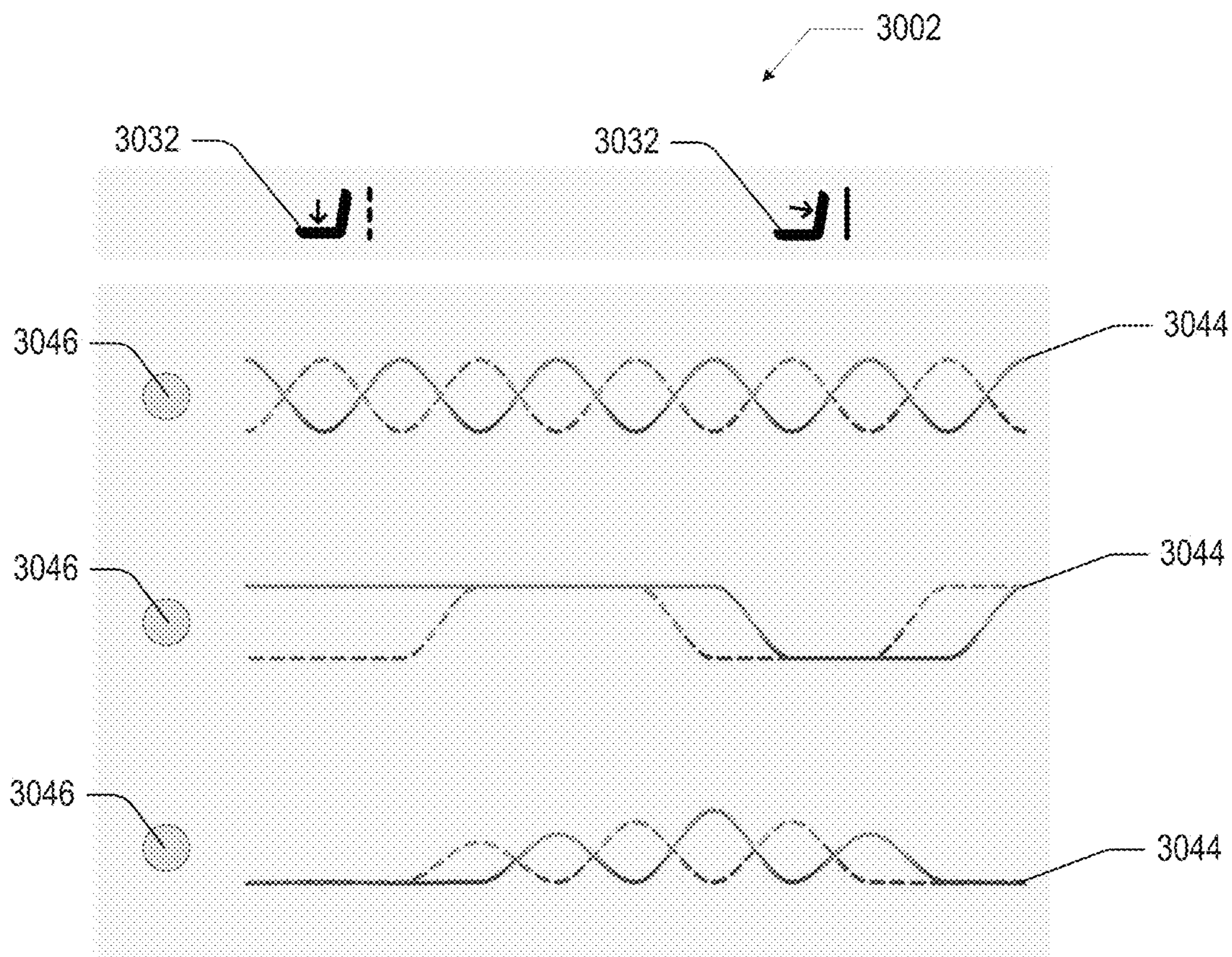


Fig. 3

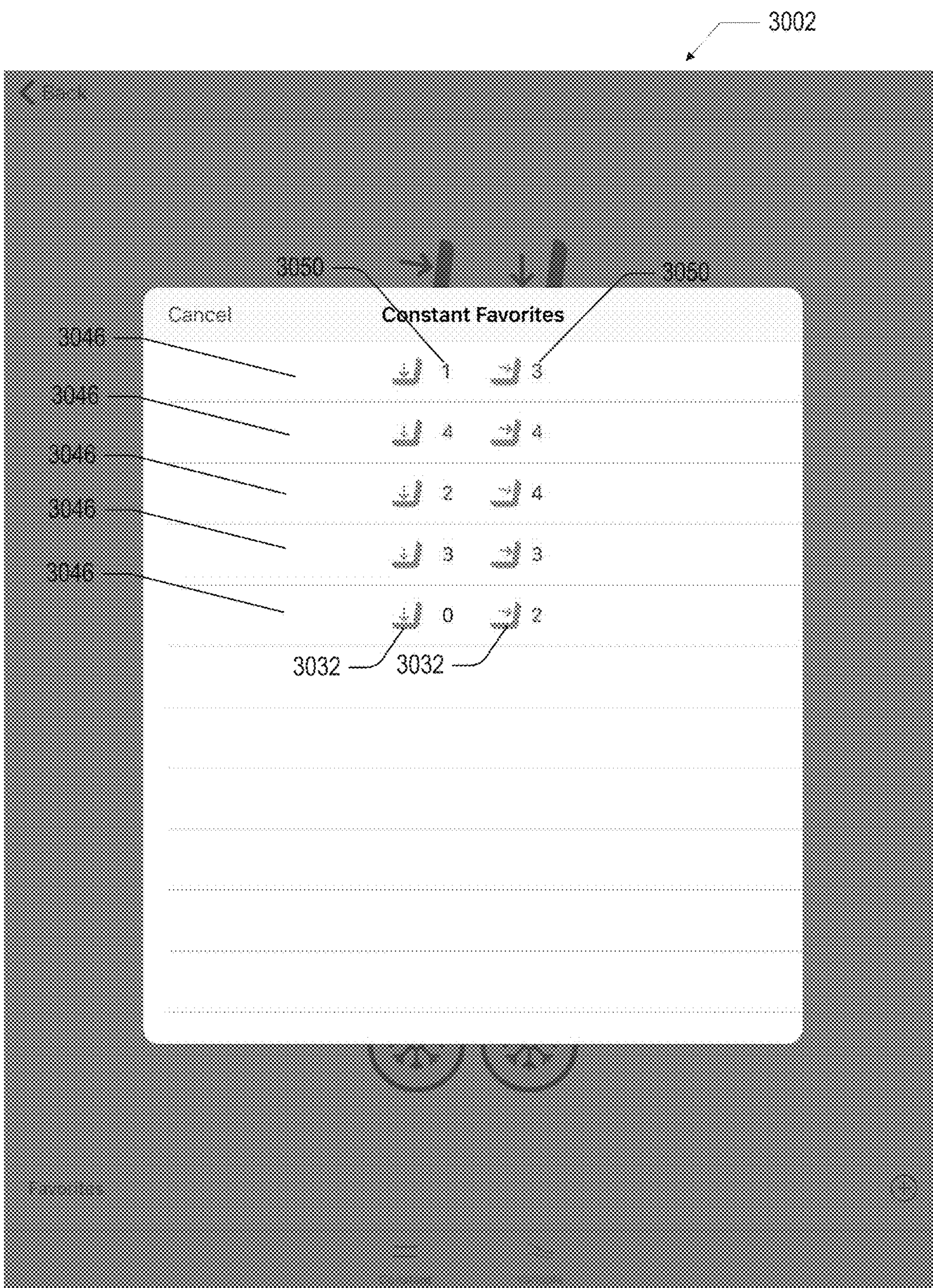


Fig. 4

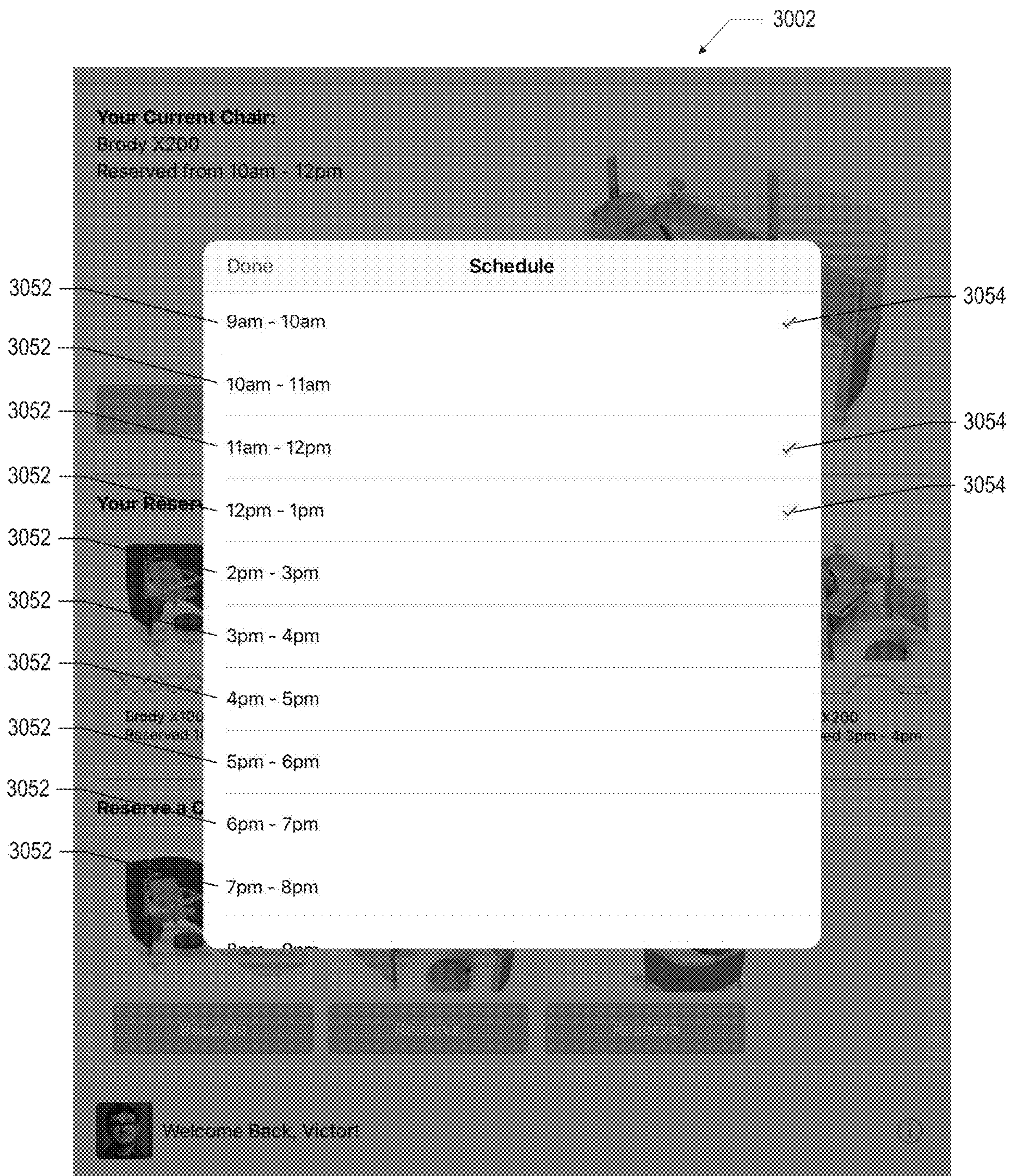


Fig. 5

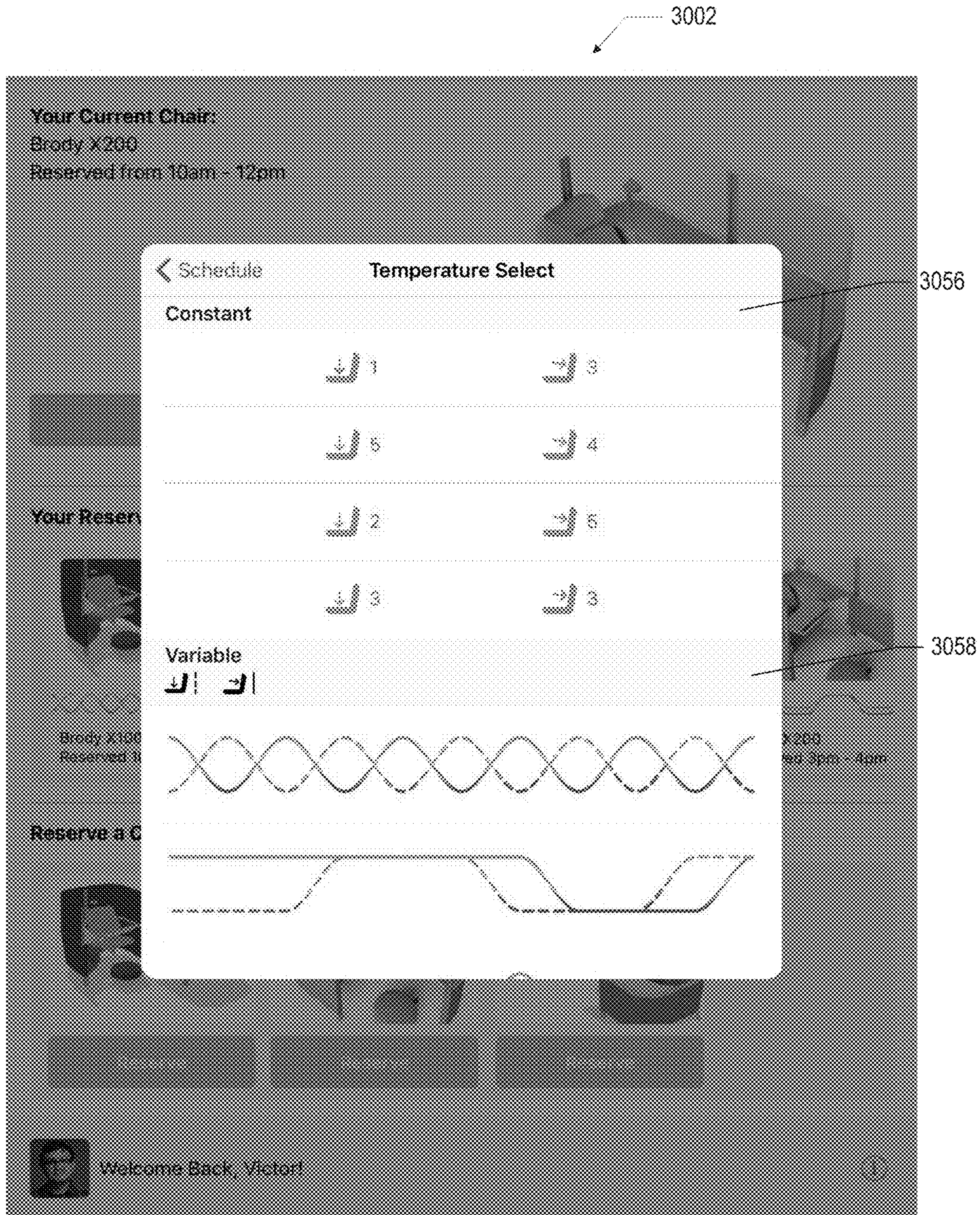


Fig. 6

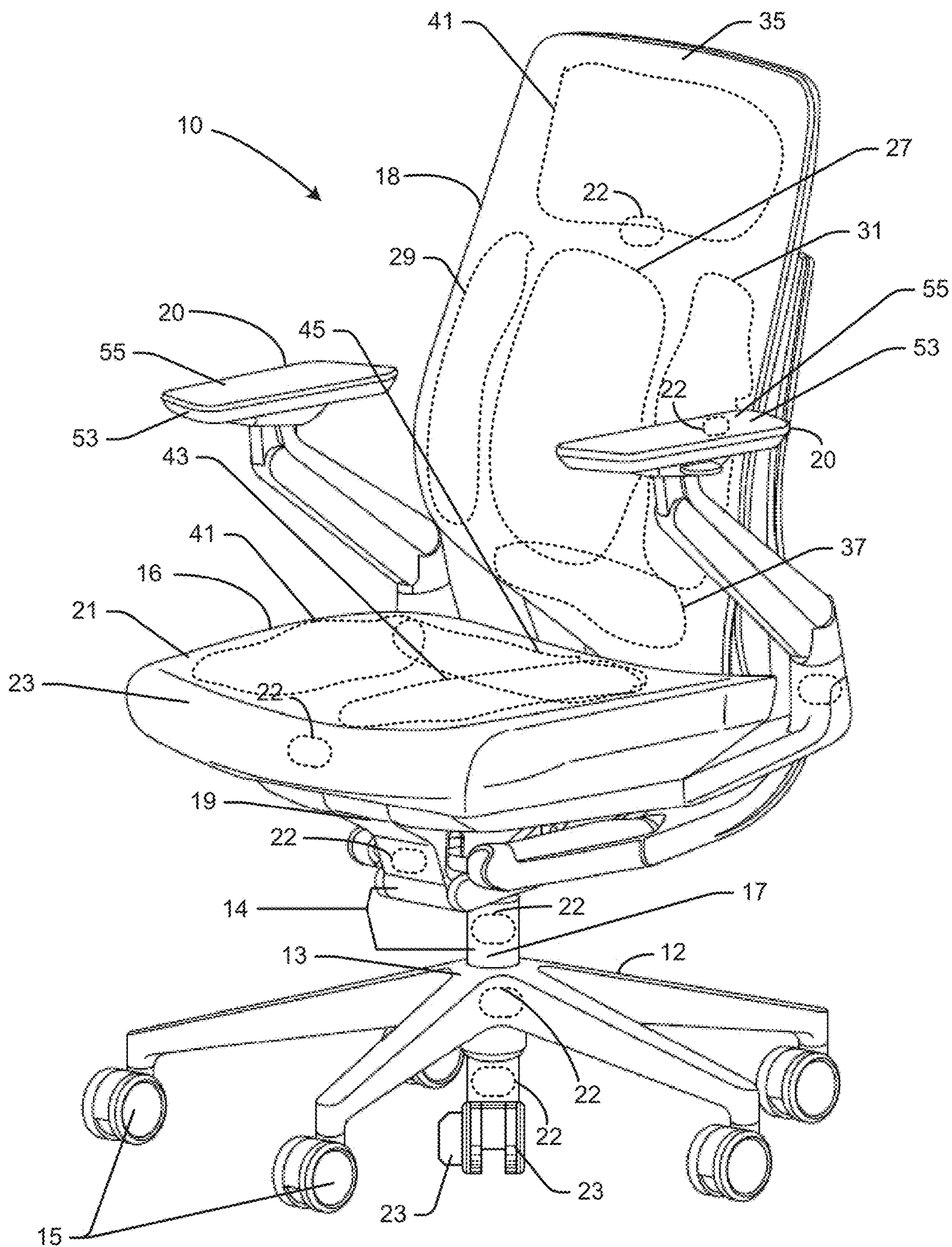


Fig. 7

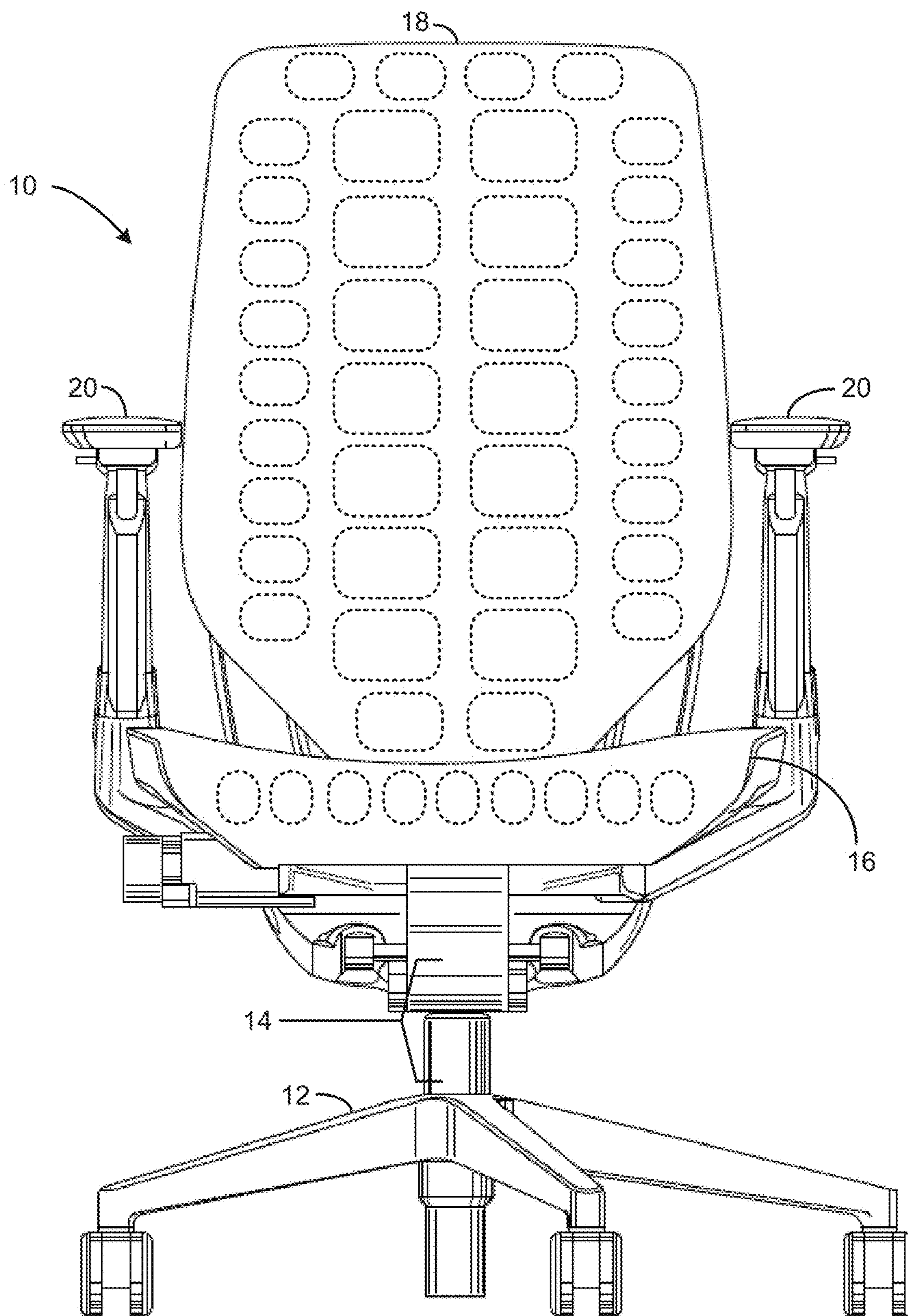


Fig. 8

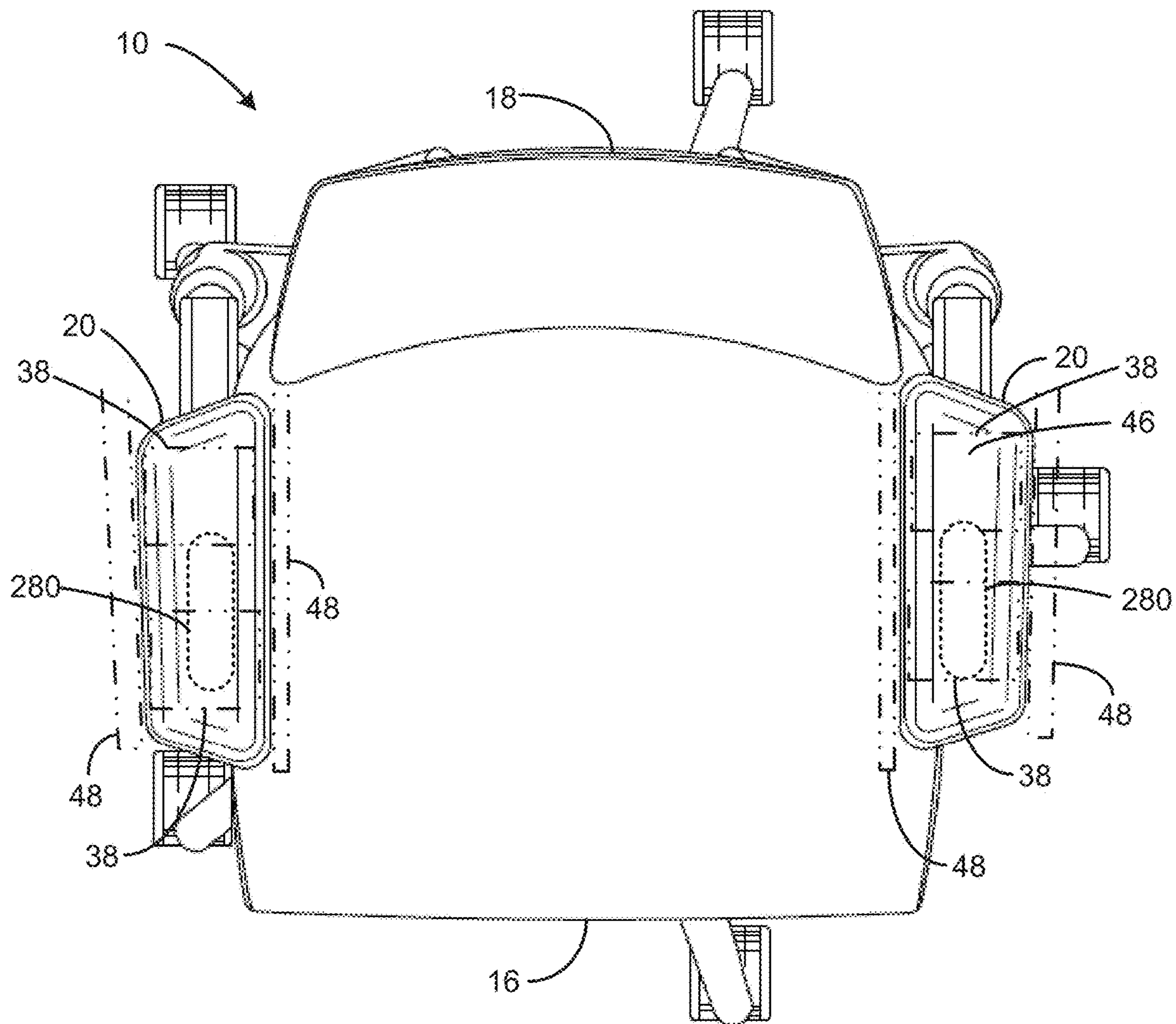


Fig. 9

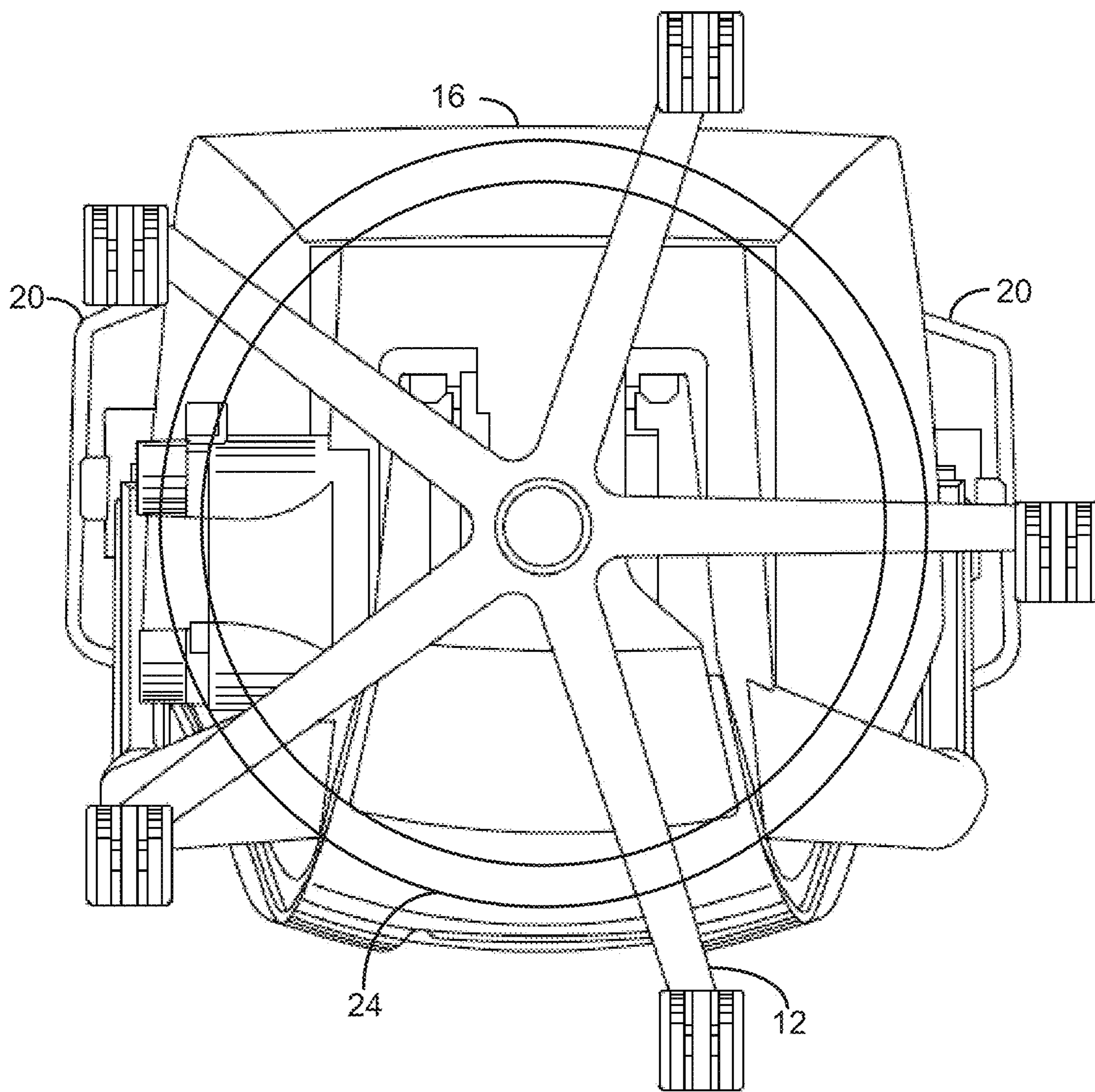


Fig. 10

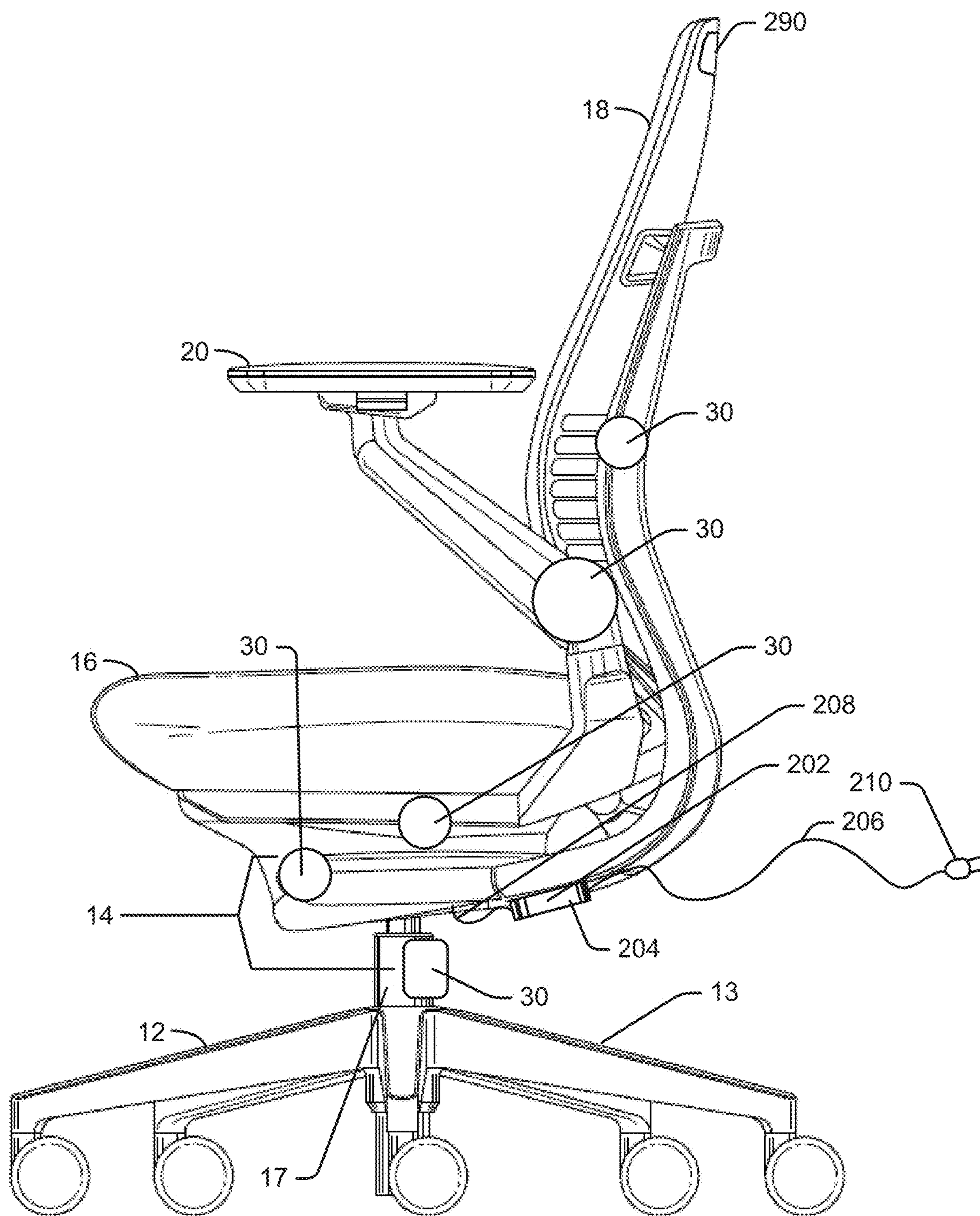


Fig. 11

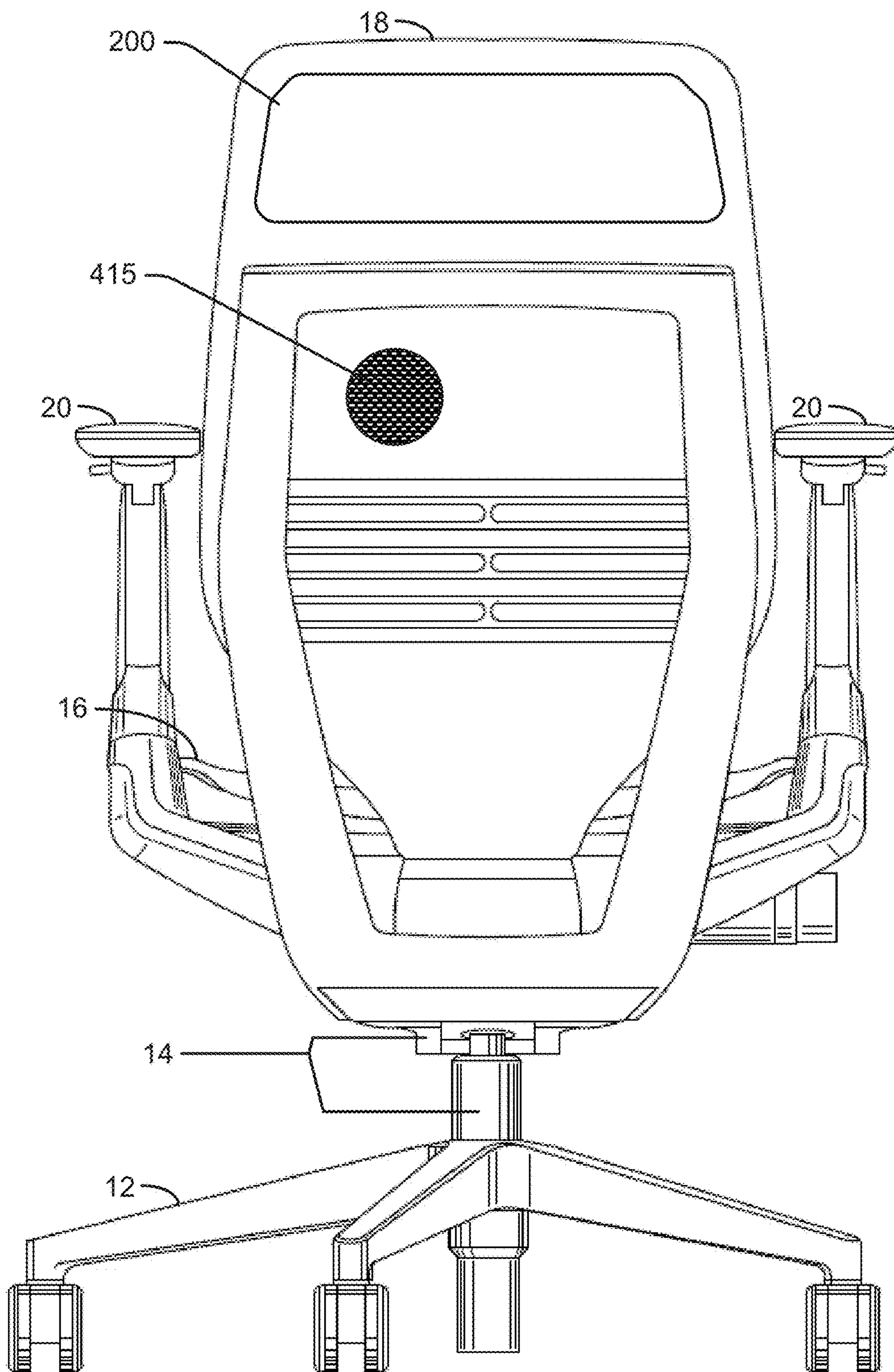


Fig. 12

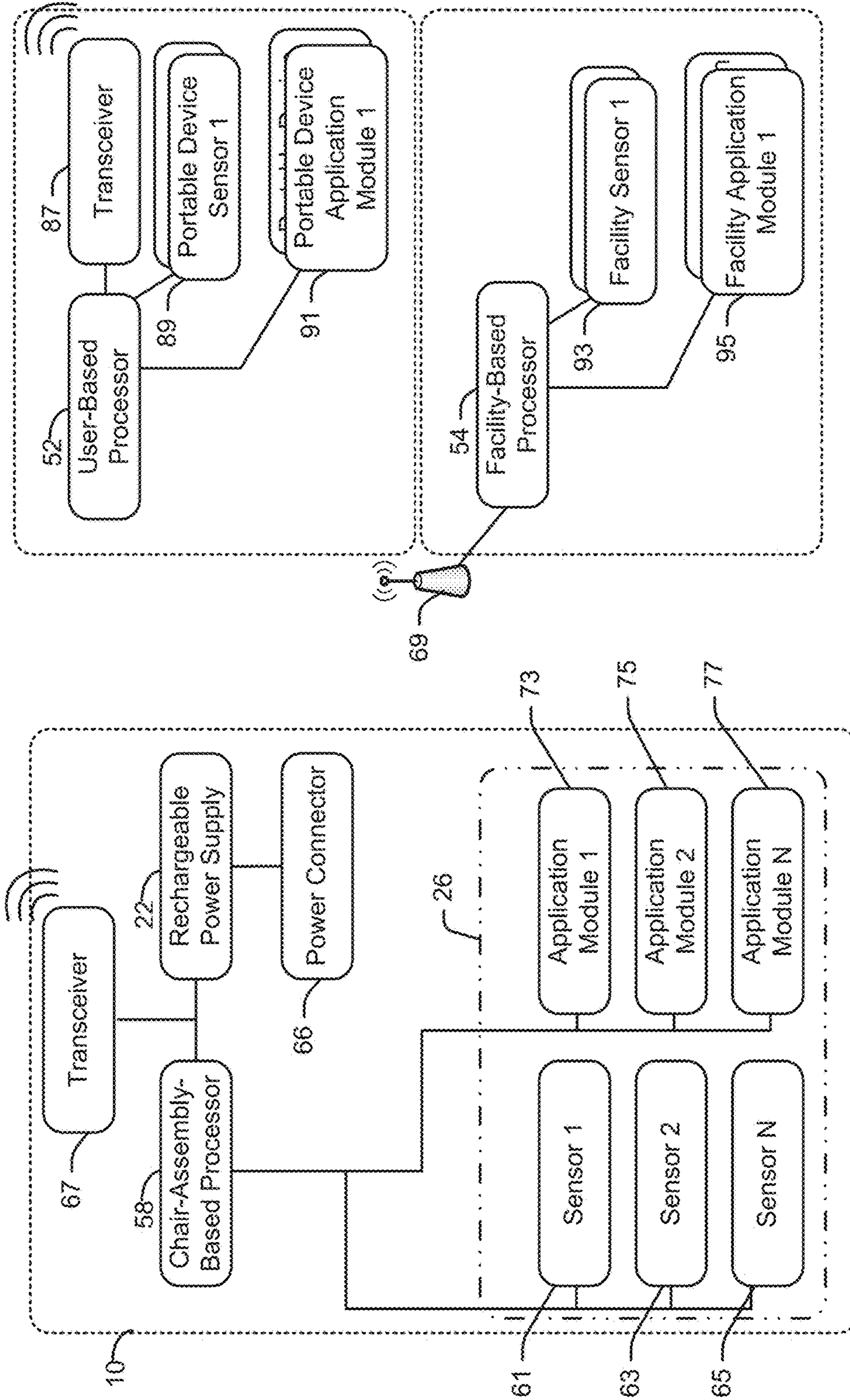


Fig. 13

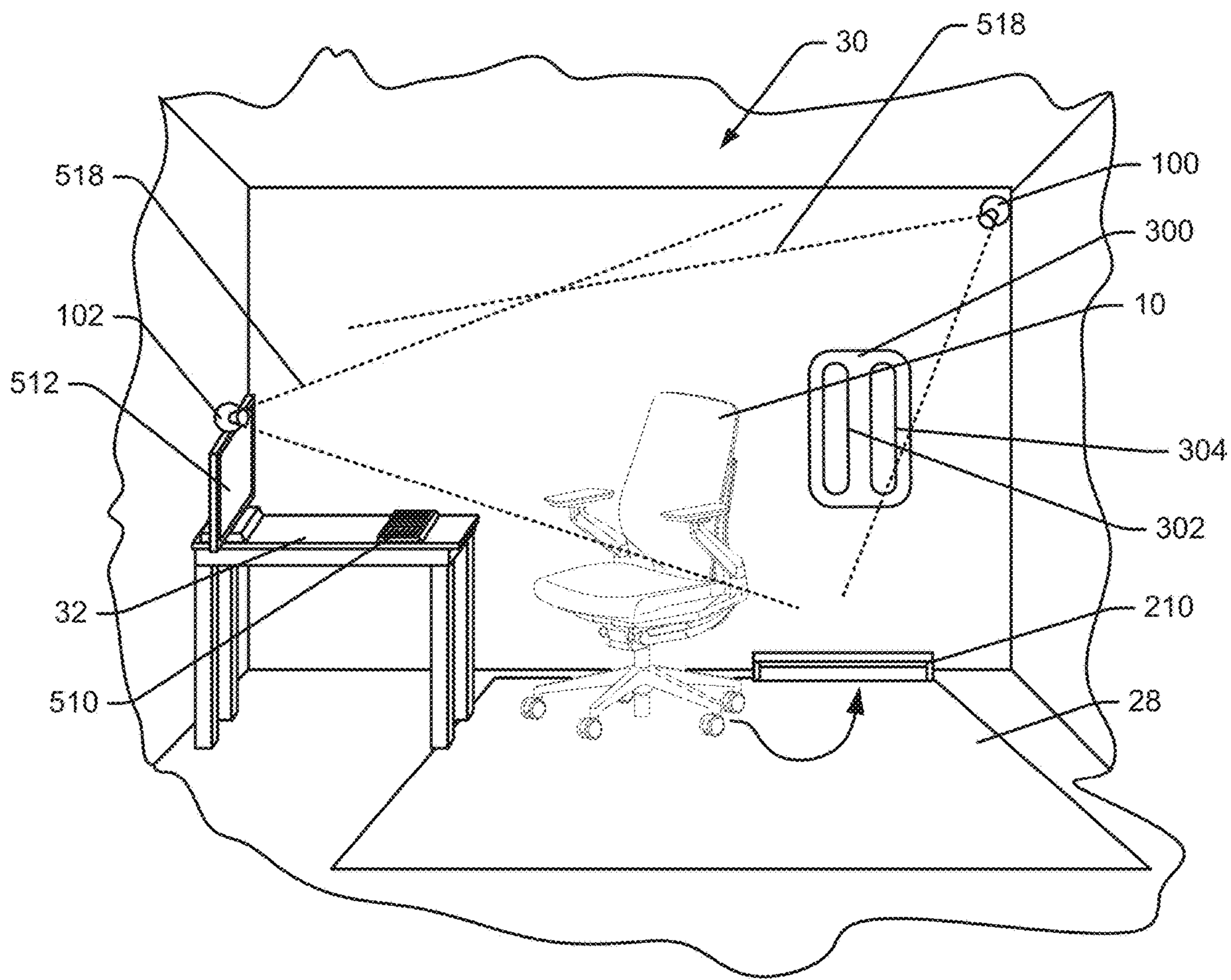


Fig. 14

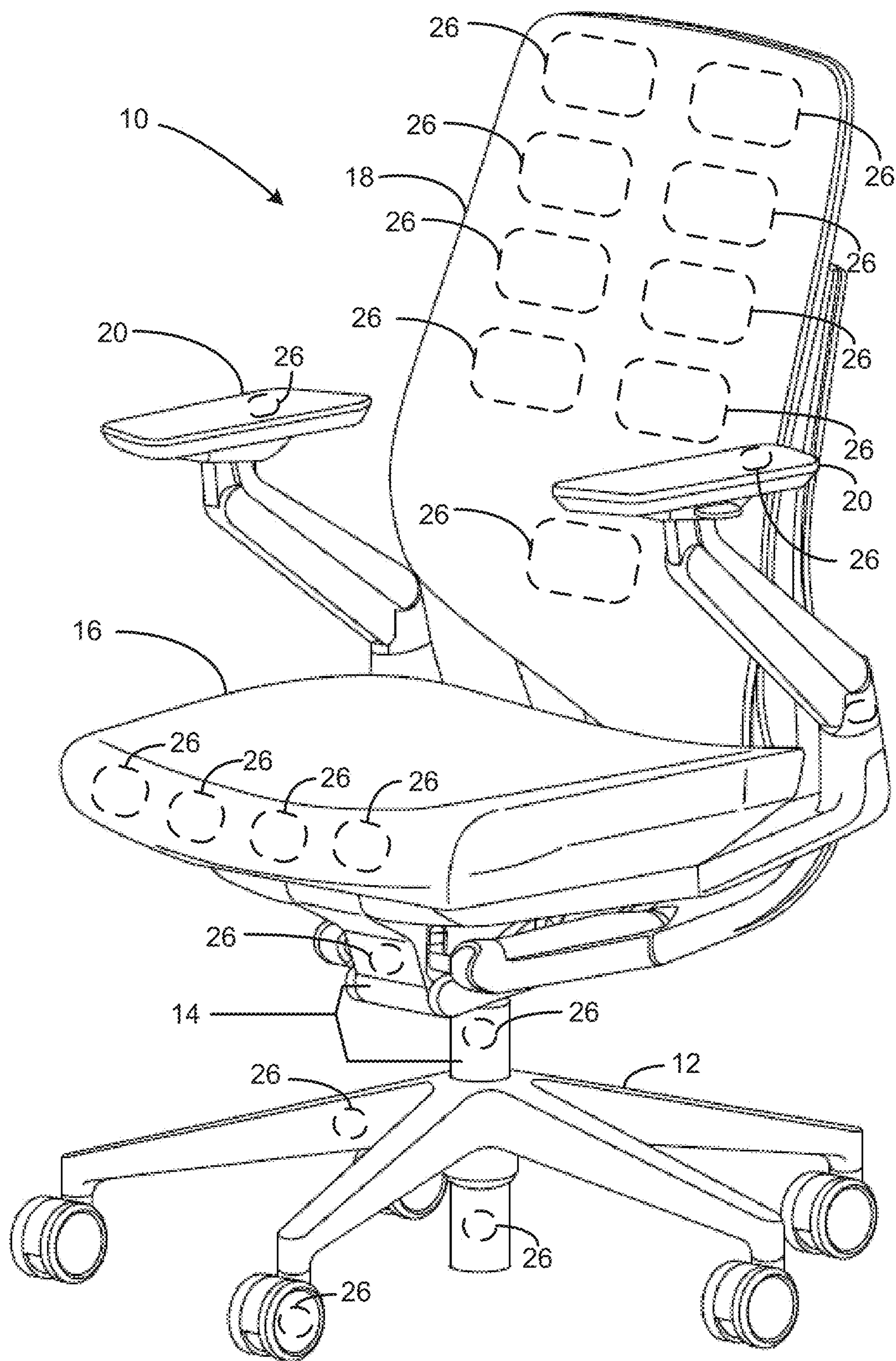


Fig. 15

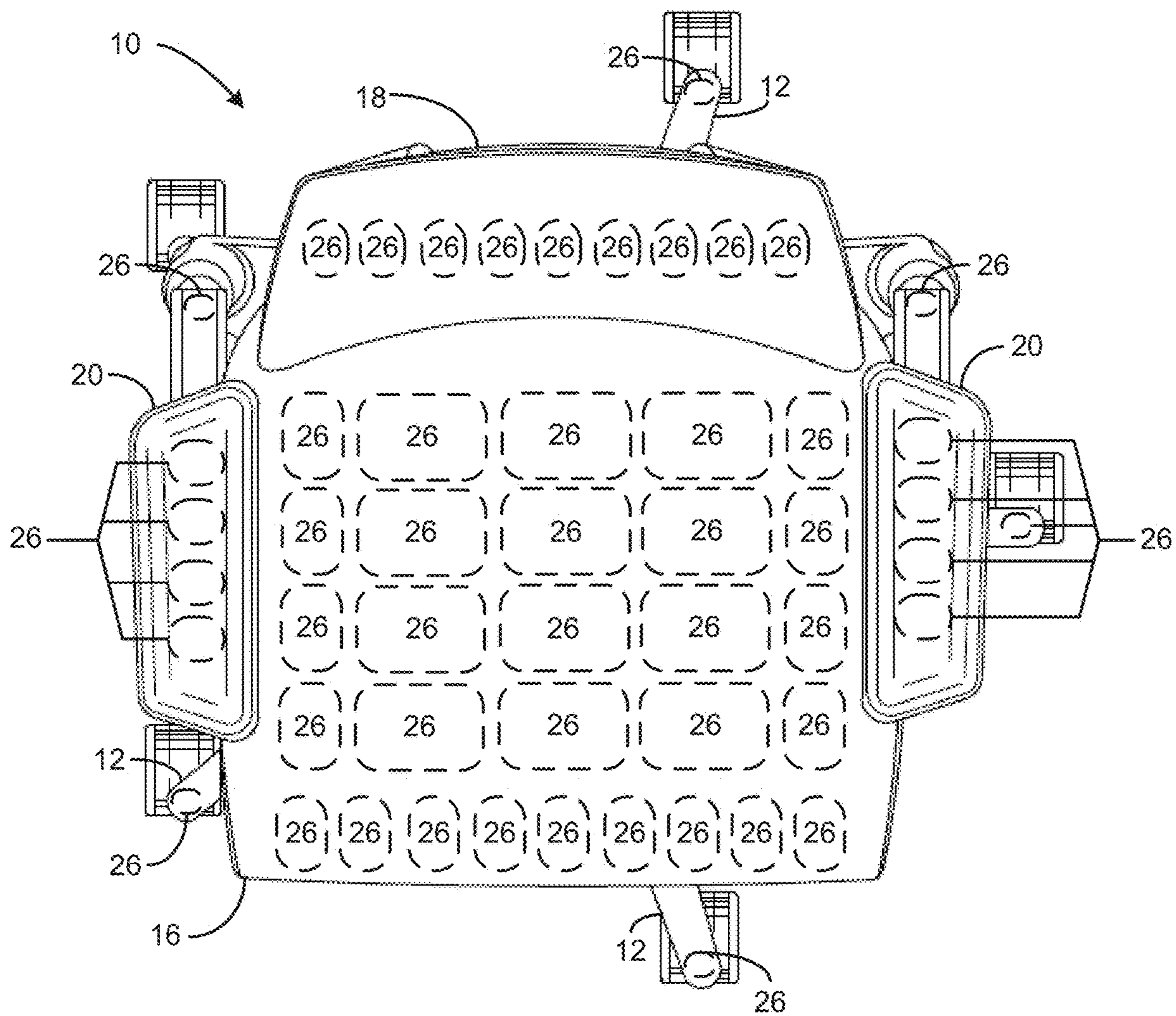


Fig. 16

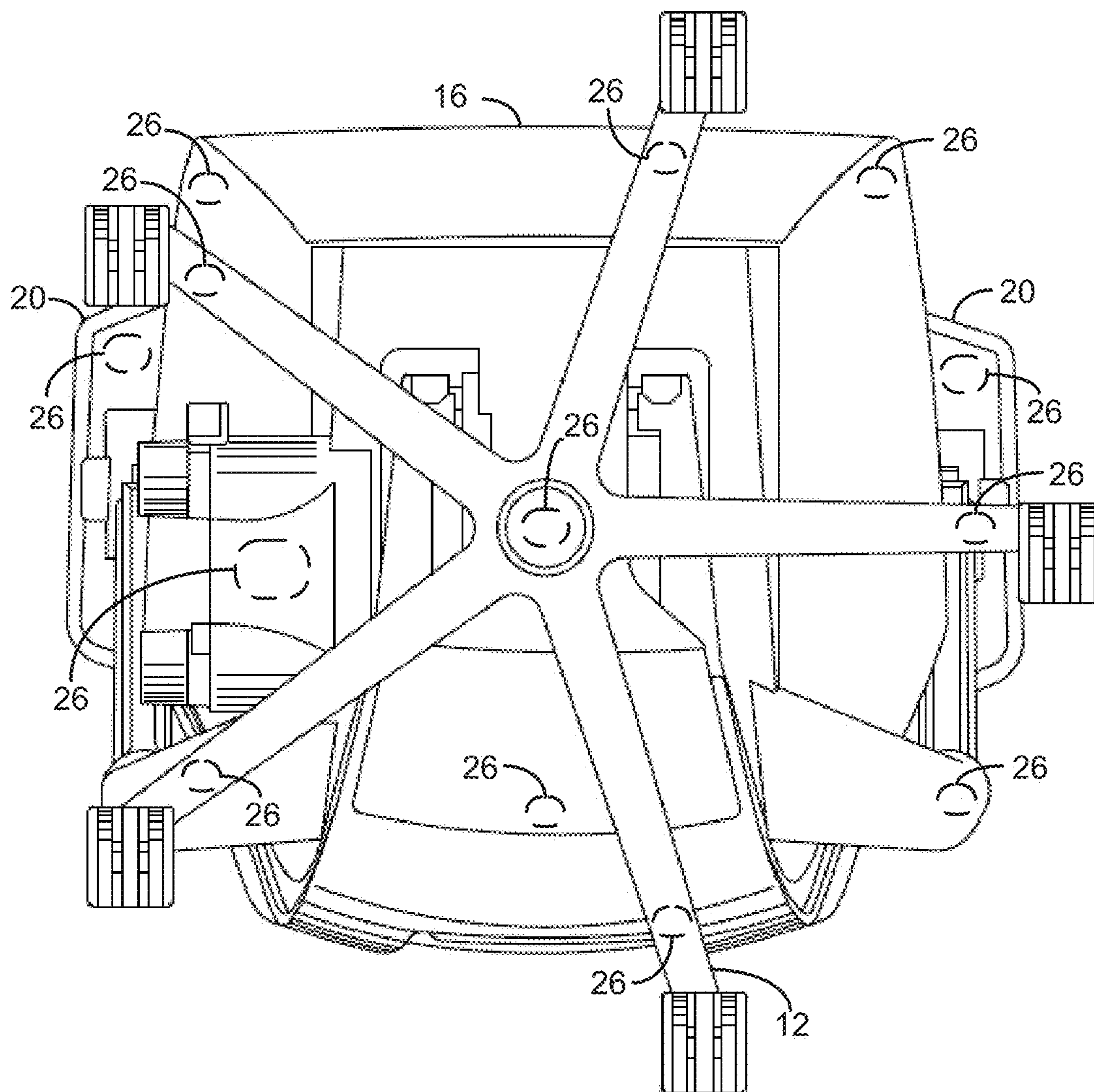


Fig. 17

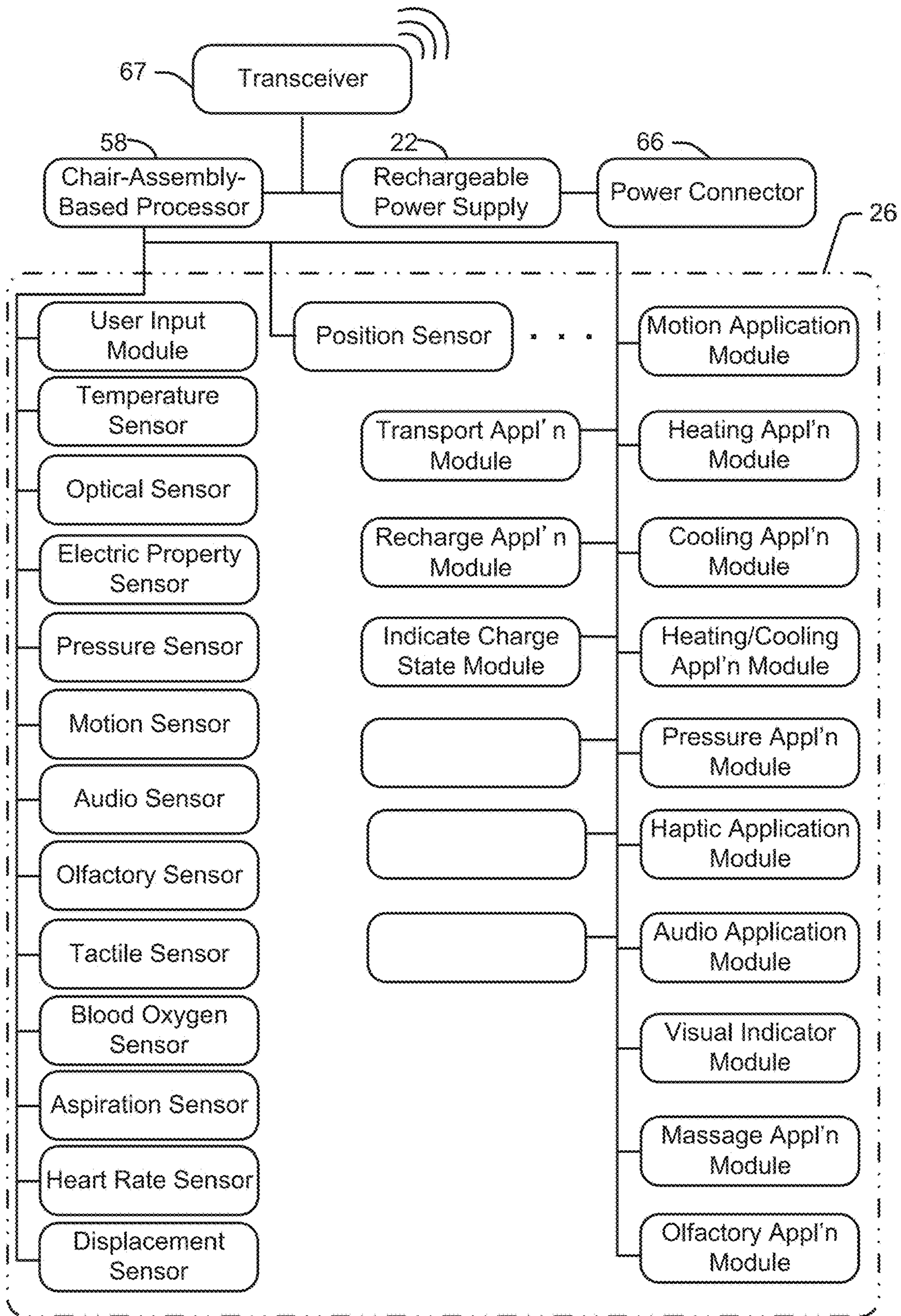


Fig. 18

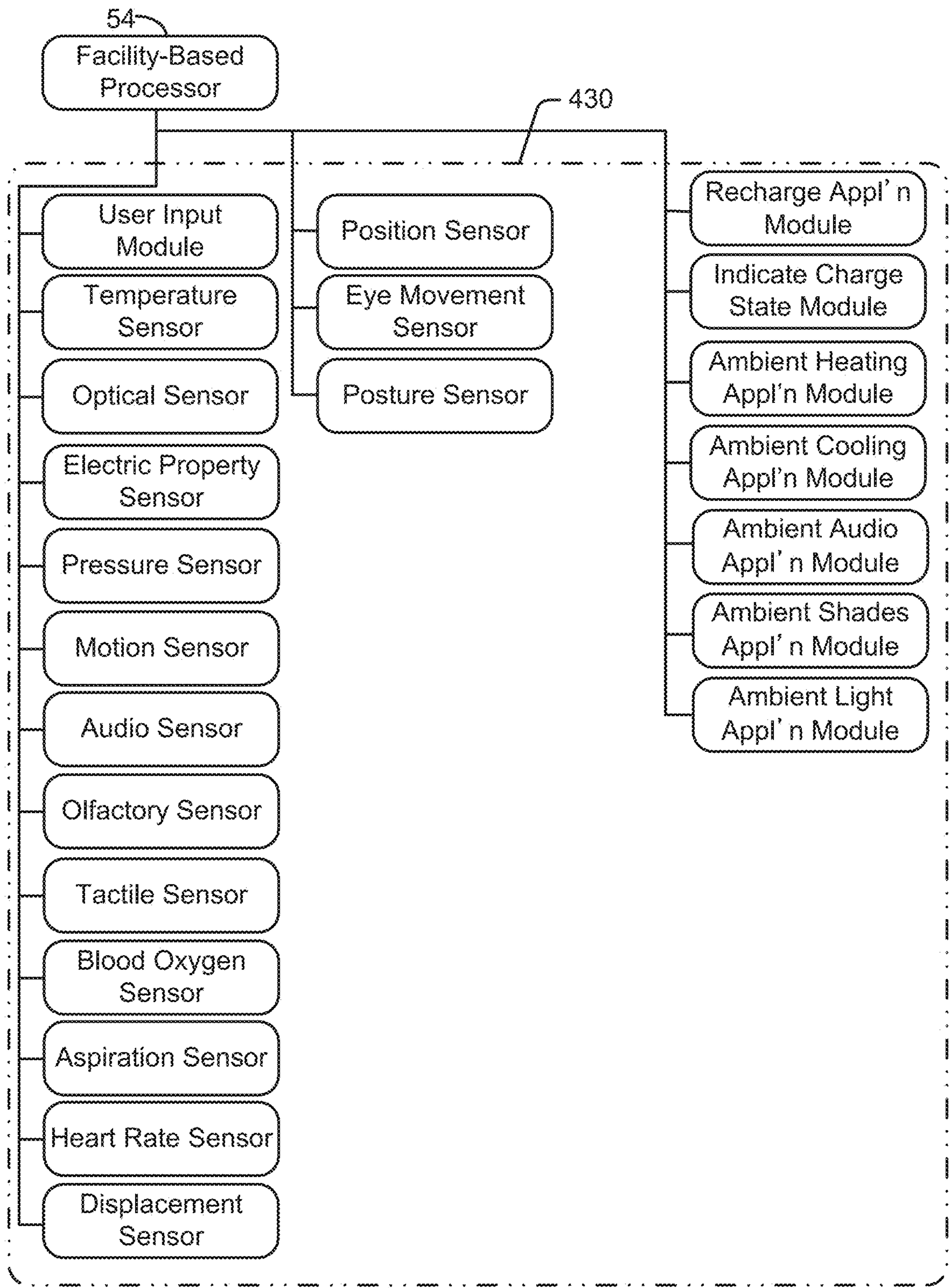


Fig. 19

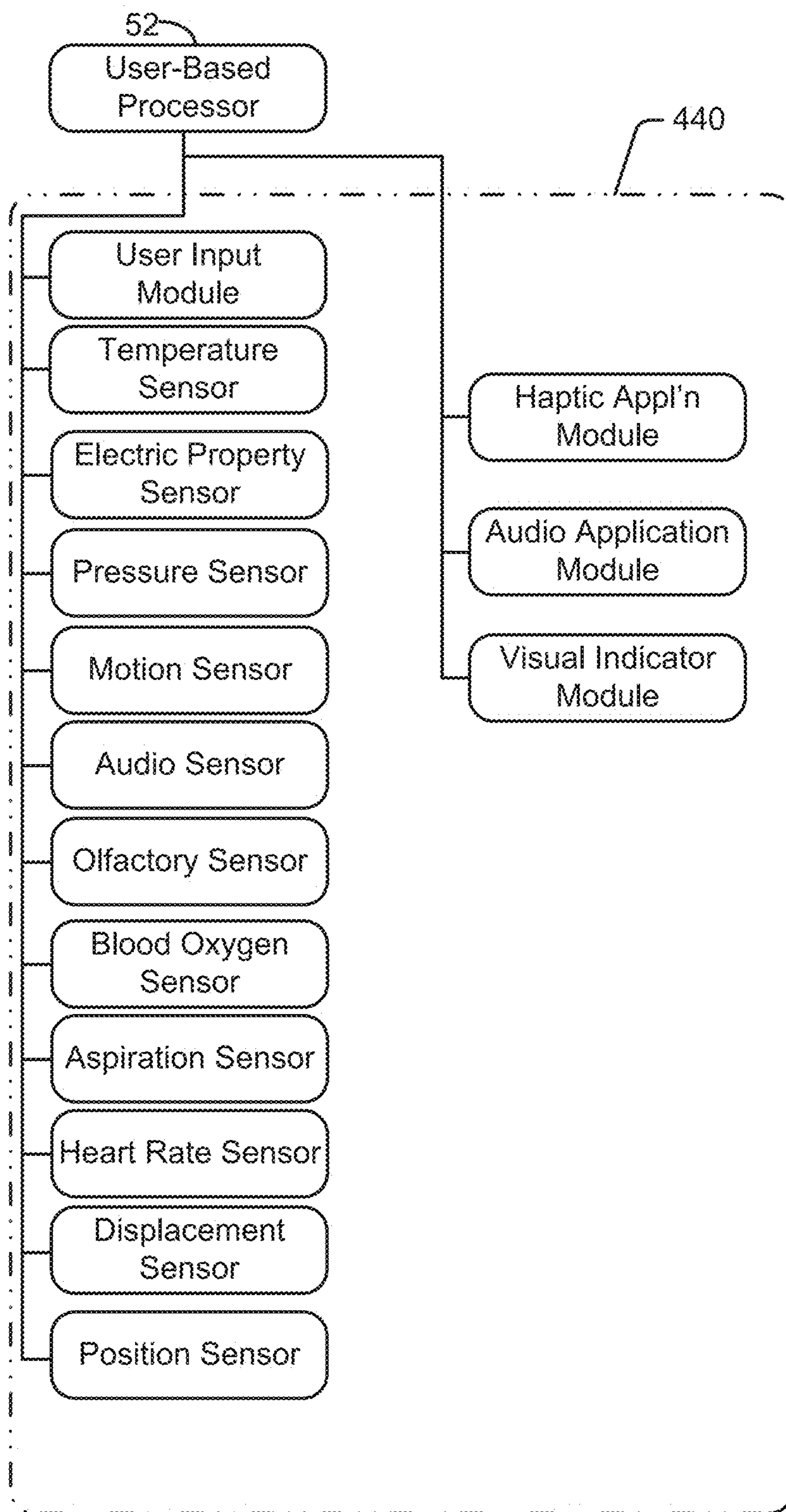


Fig. 20

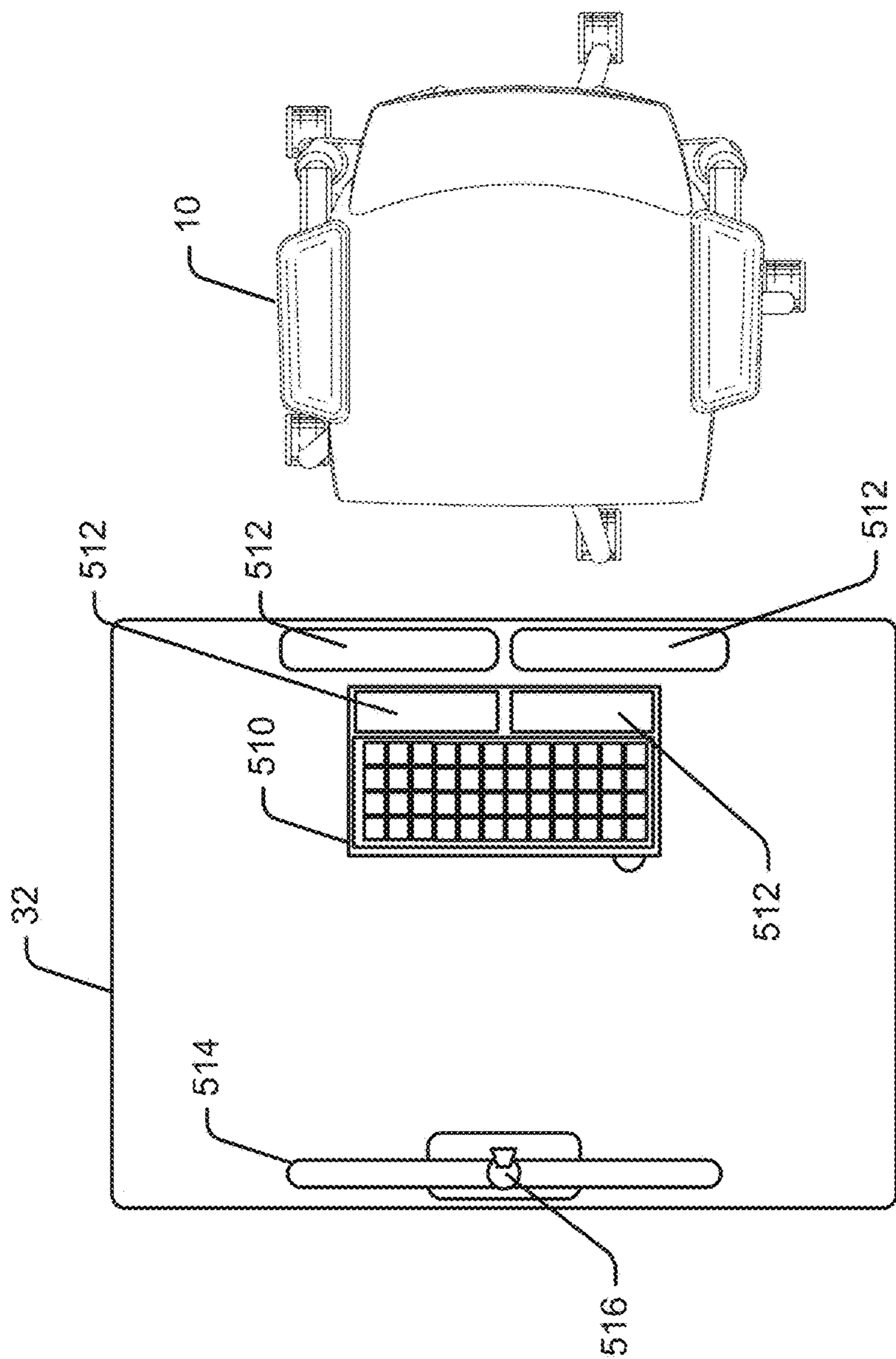


Fig. 21

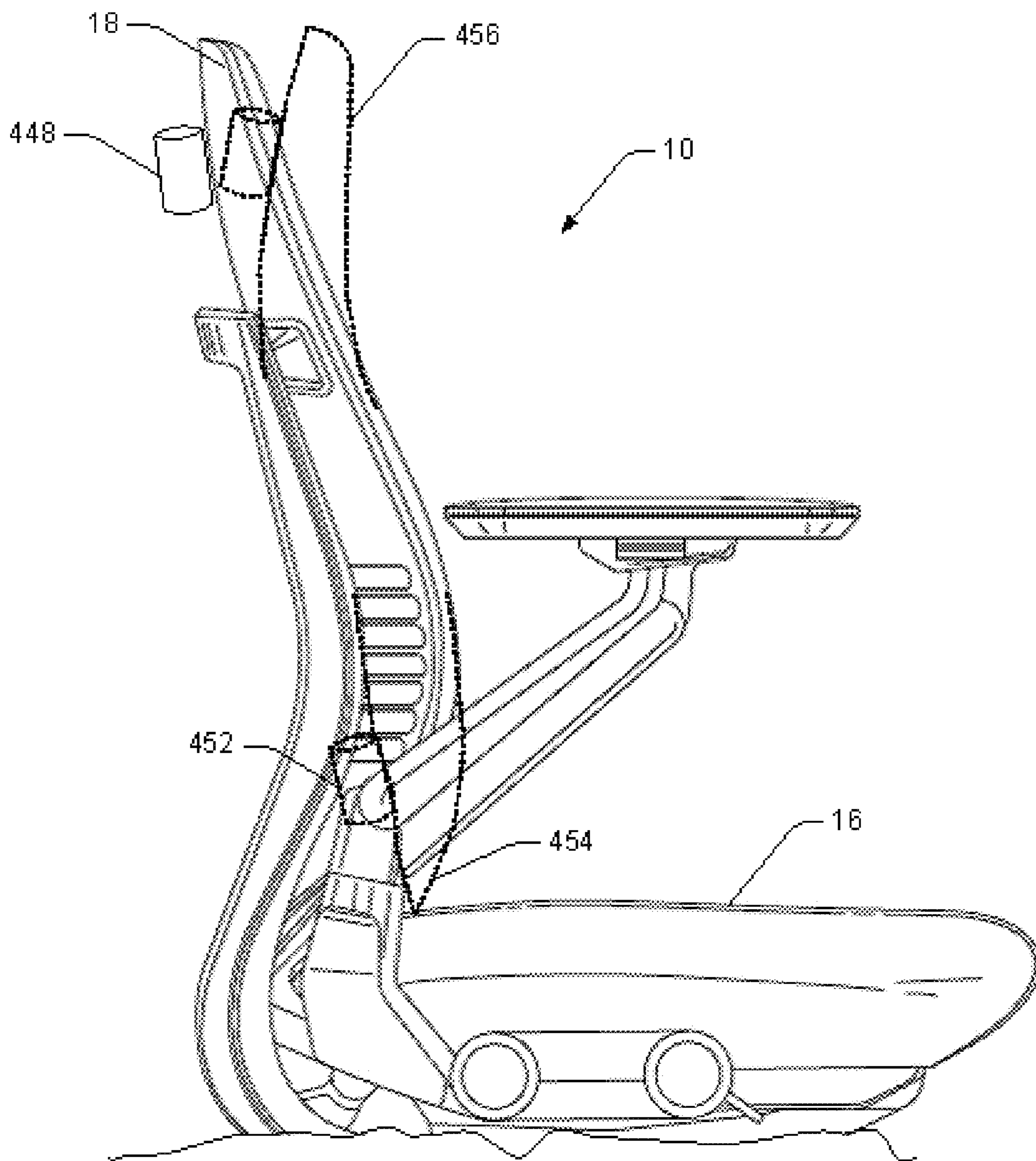


Fig. 22

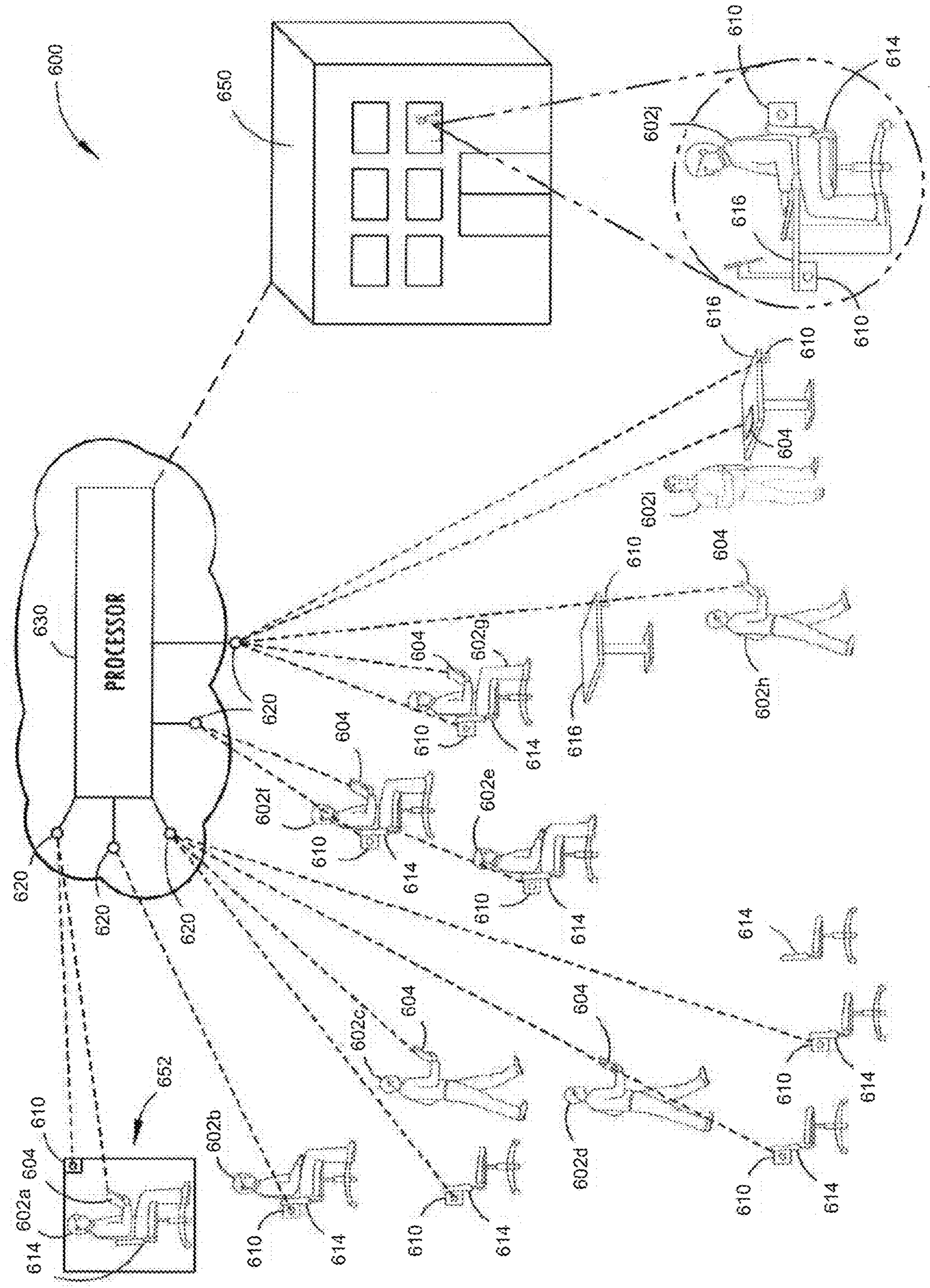


Fig. 23

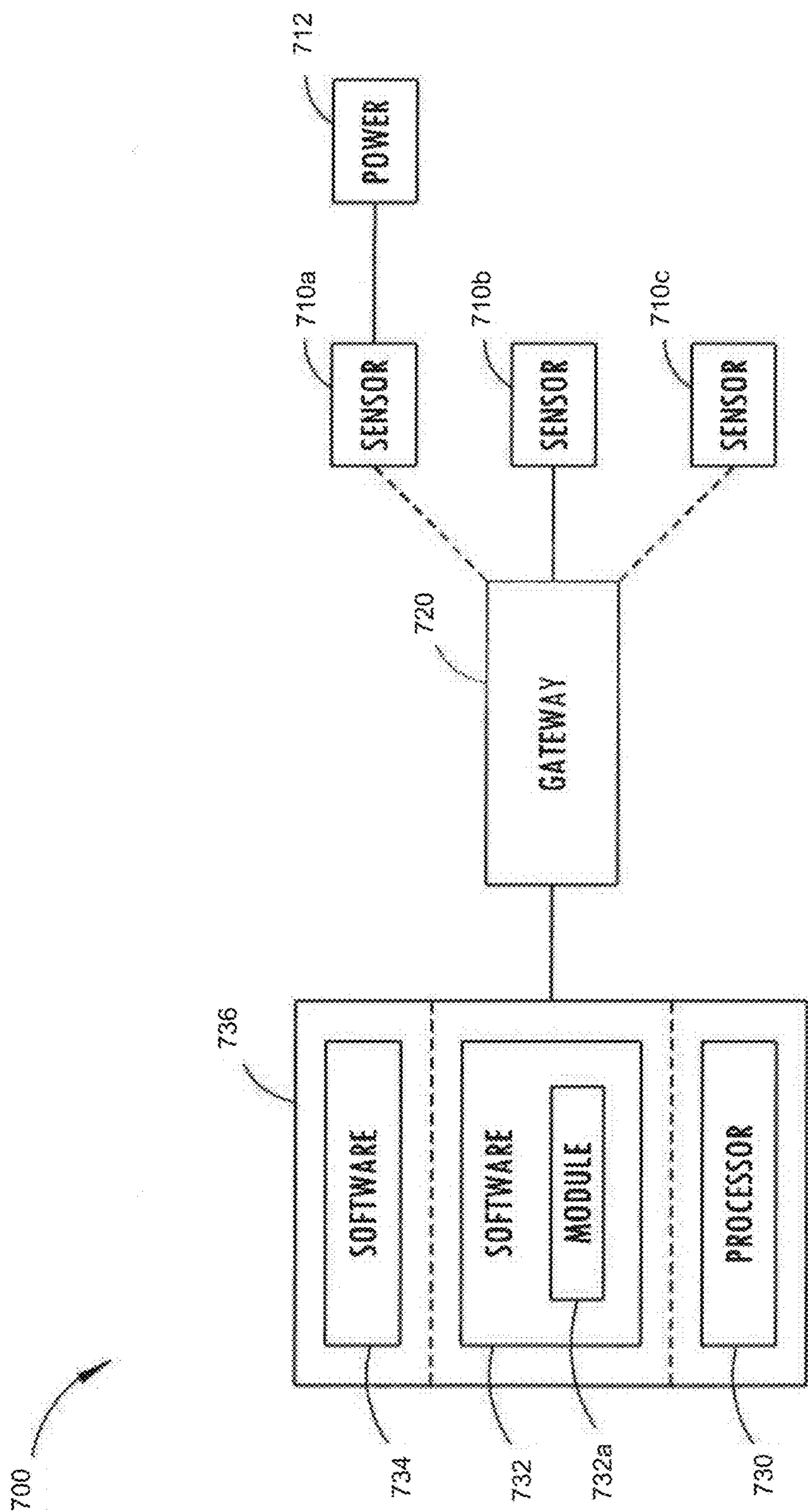


Fig. 24

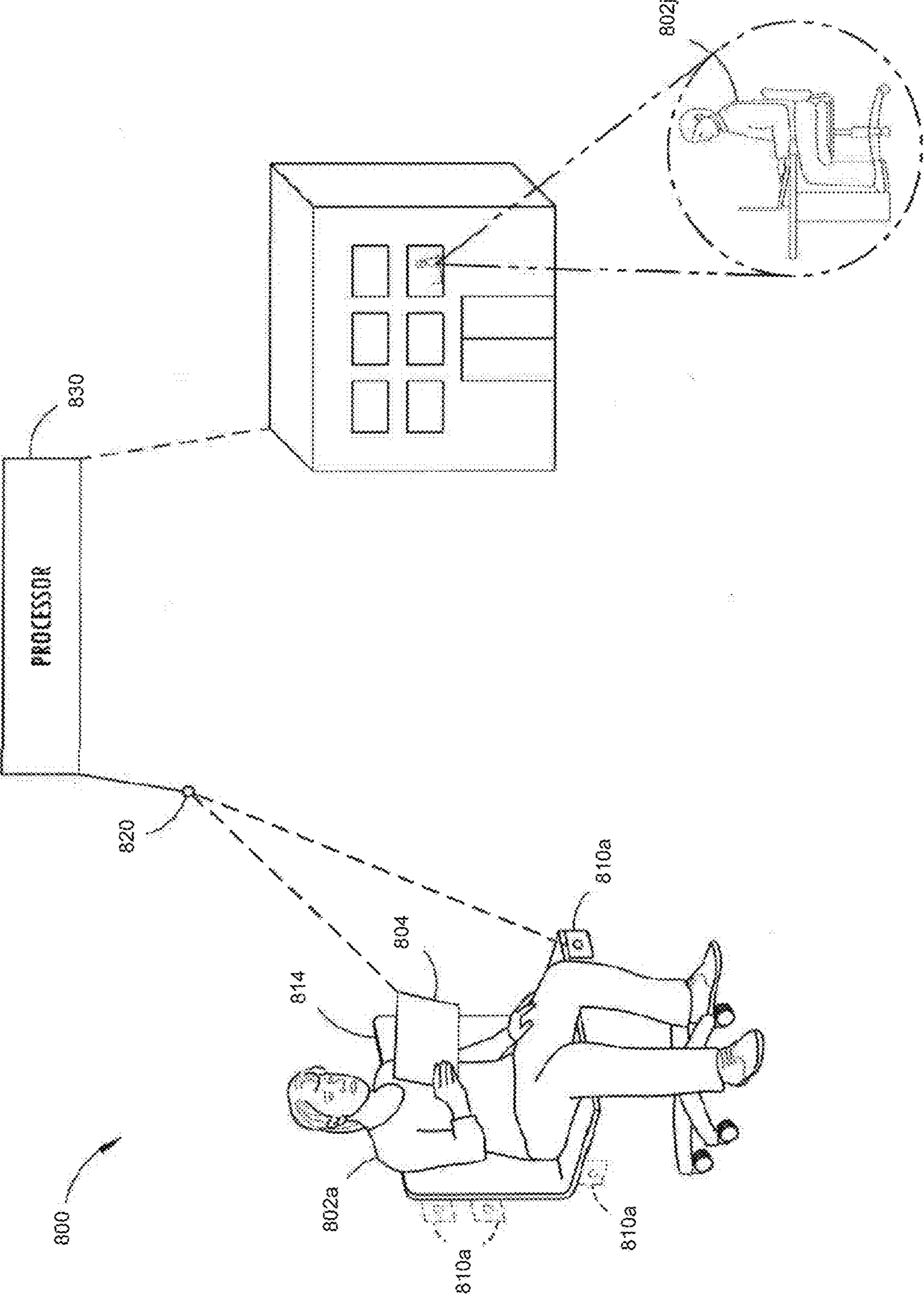


Fig. 25

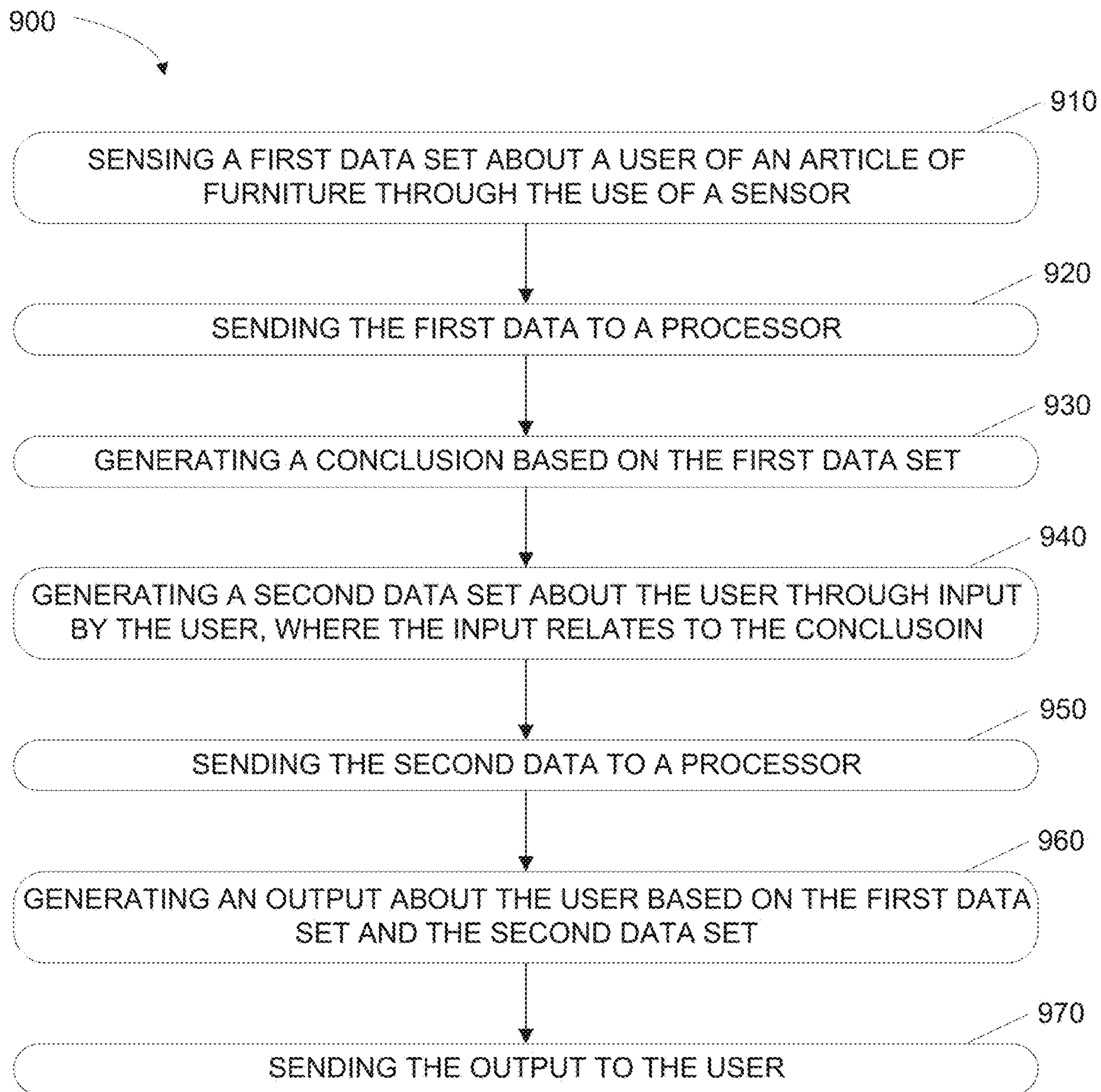


Fig. 26

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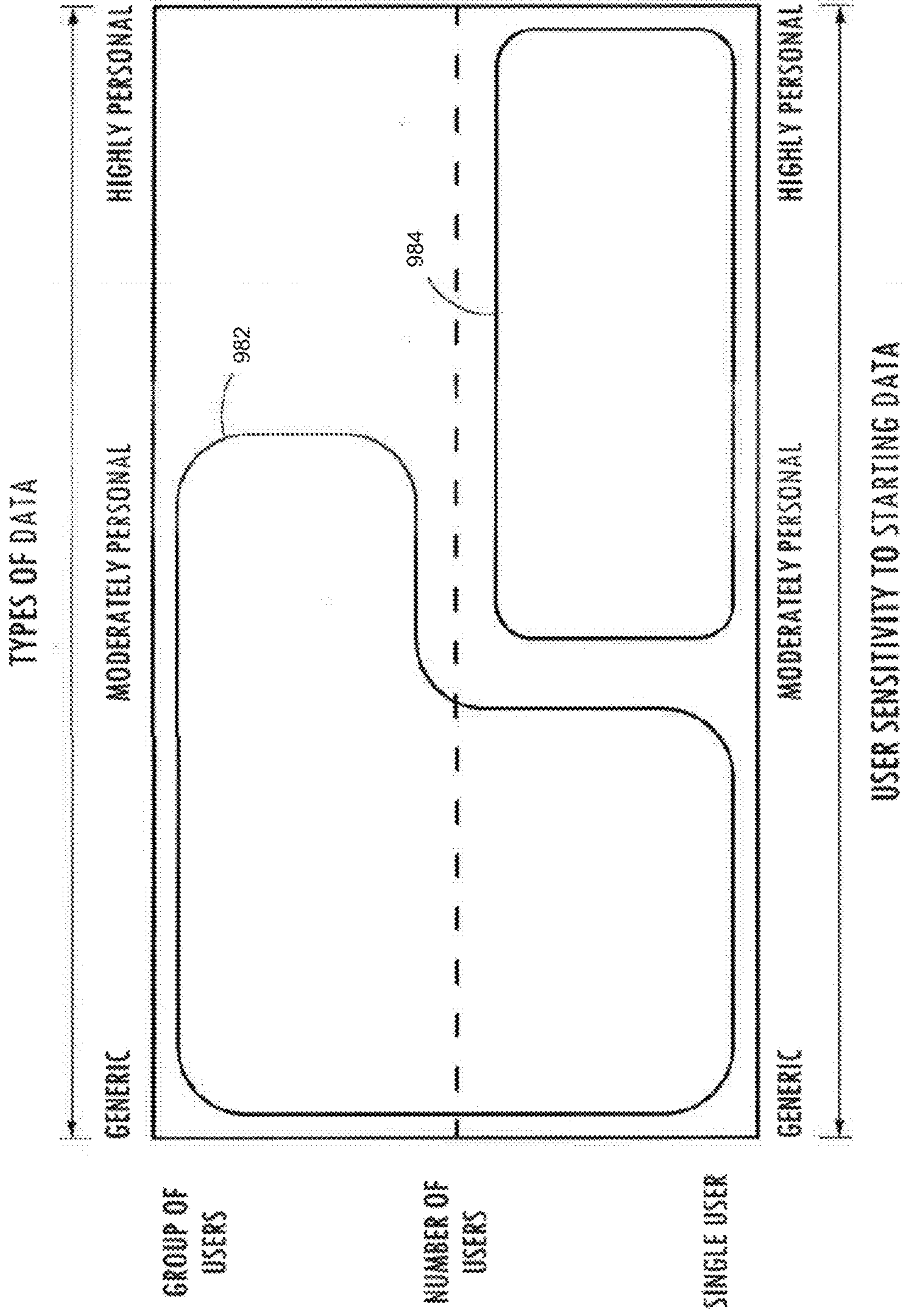


Fig. 27

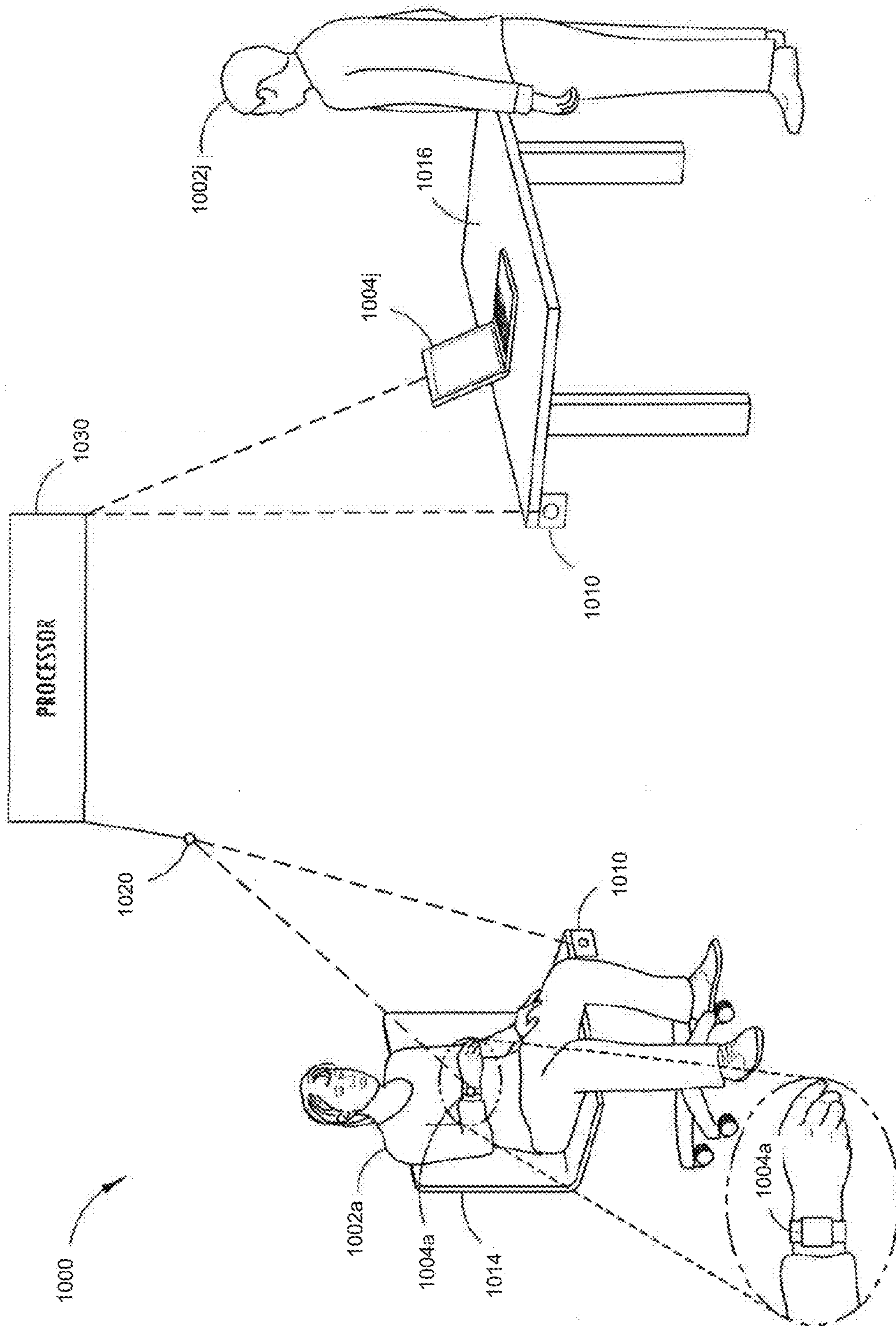


Fig. 28

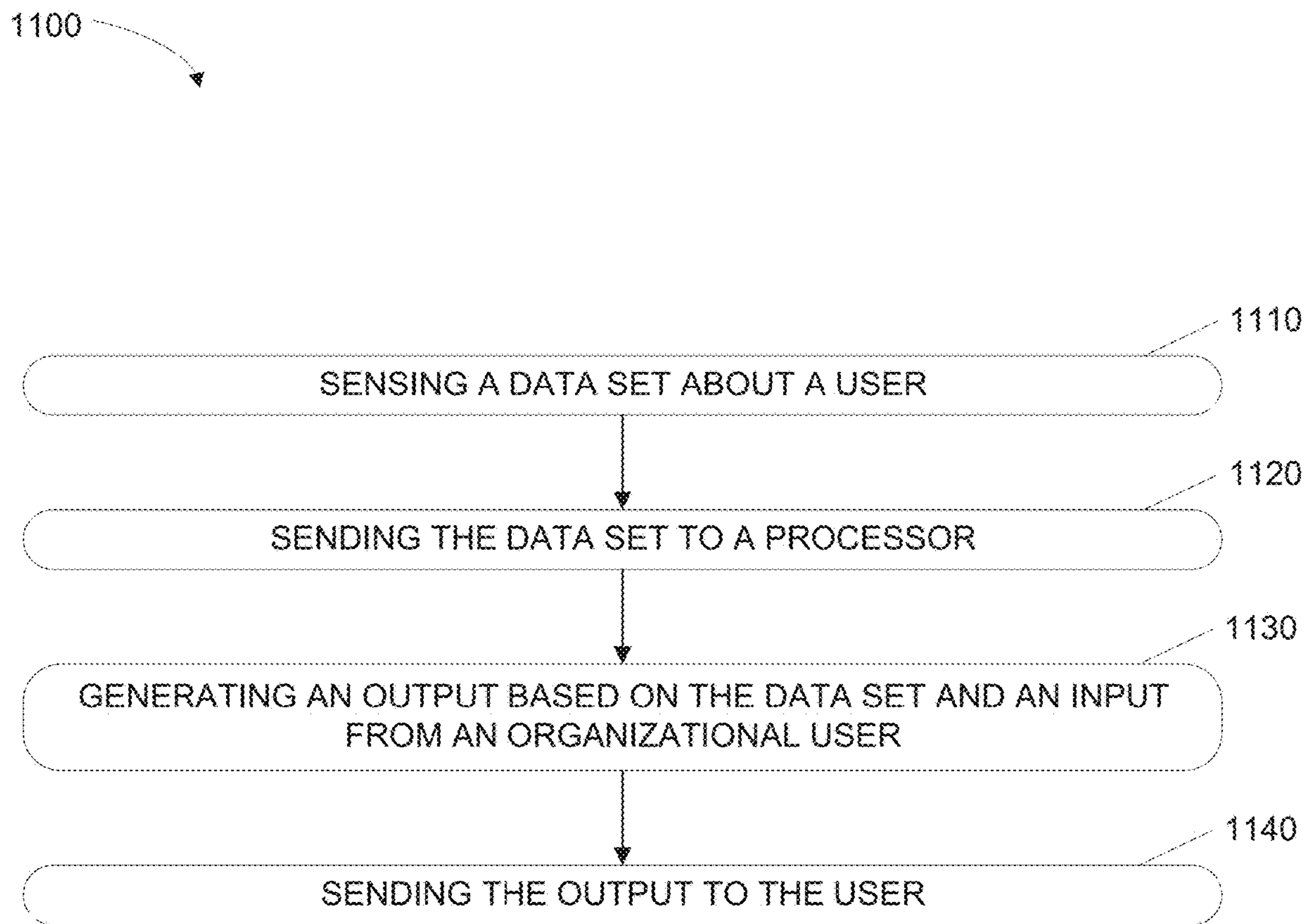


Fig. 29

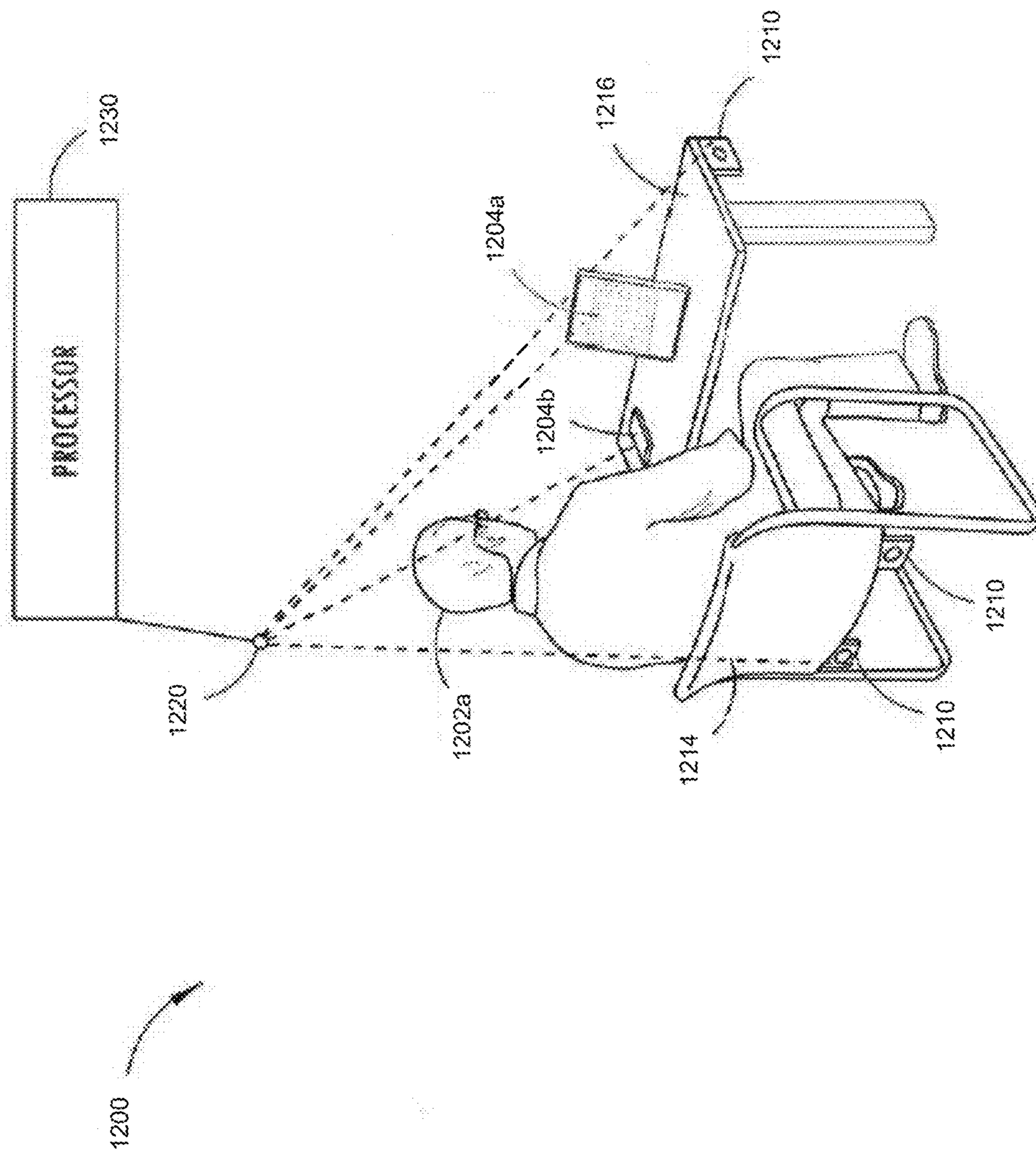


Fig. 30

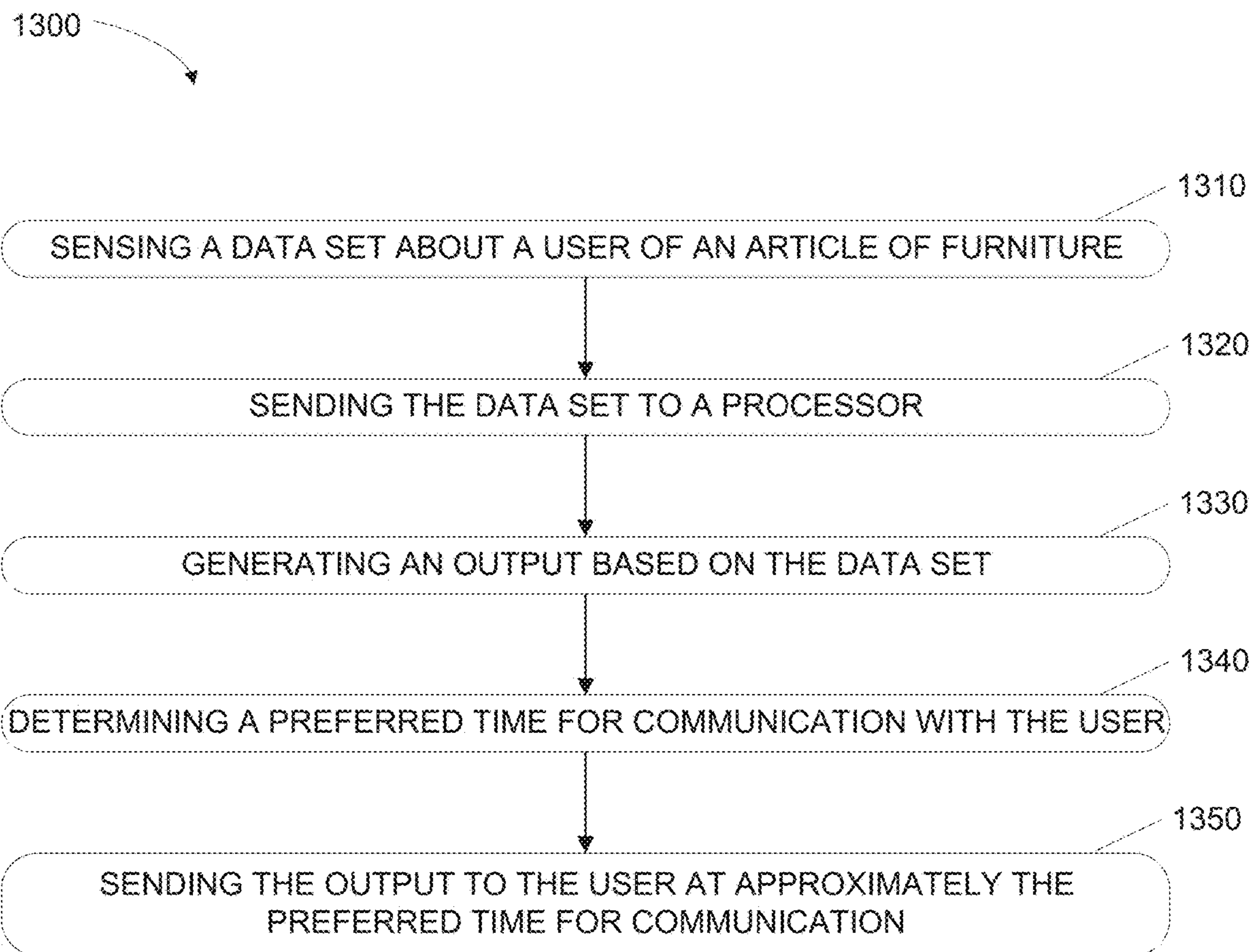


Fig. 31

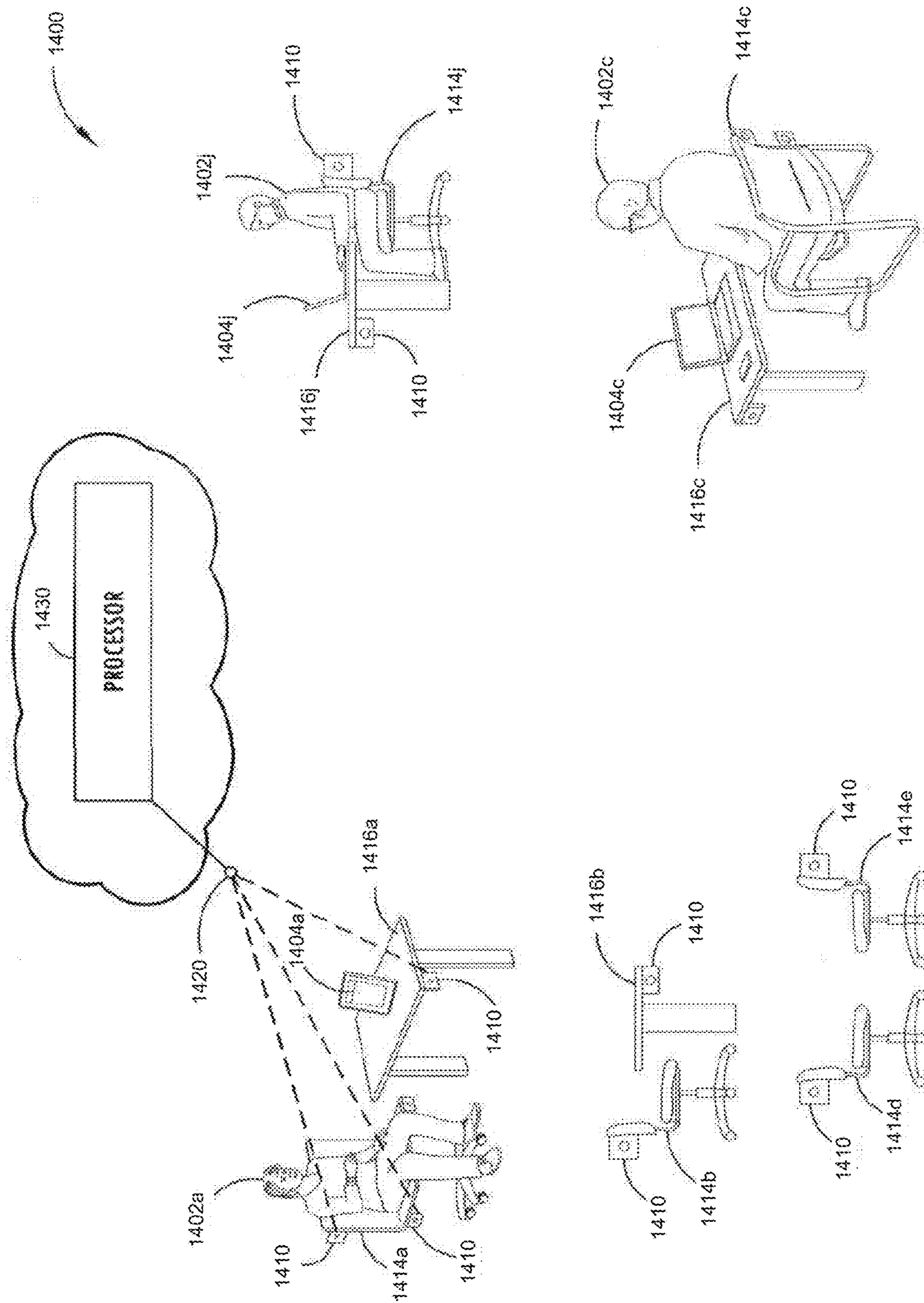


Fig. 32

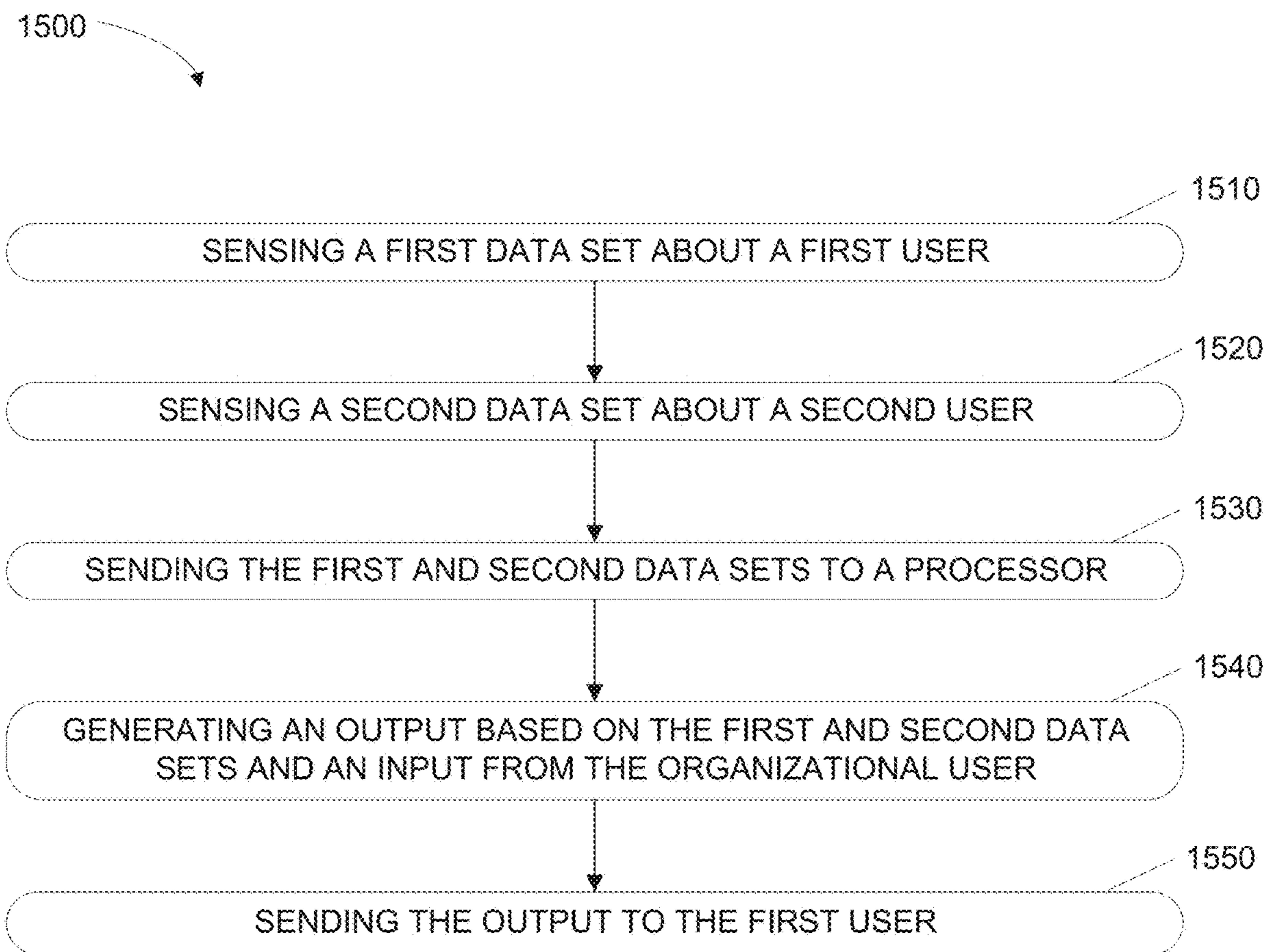


Fig. 33

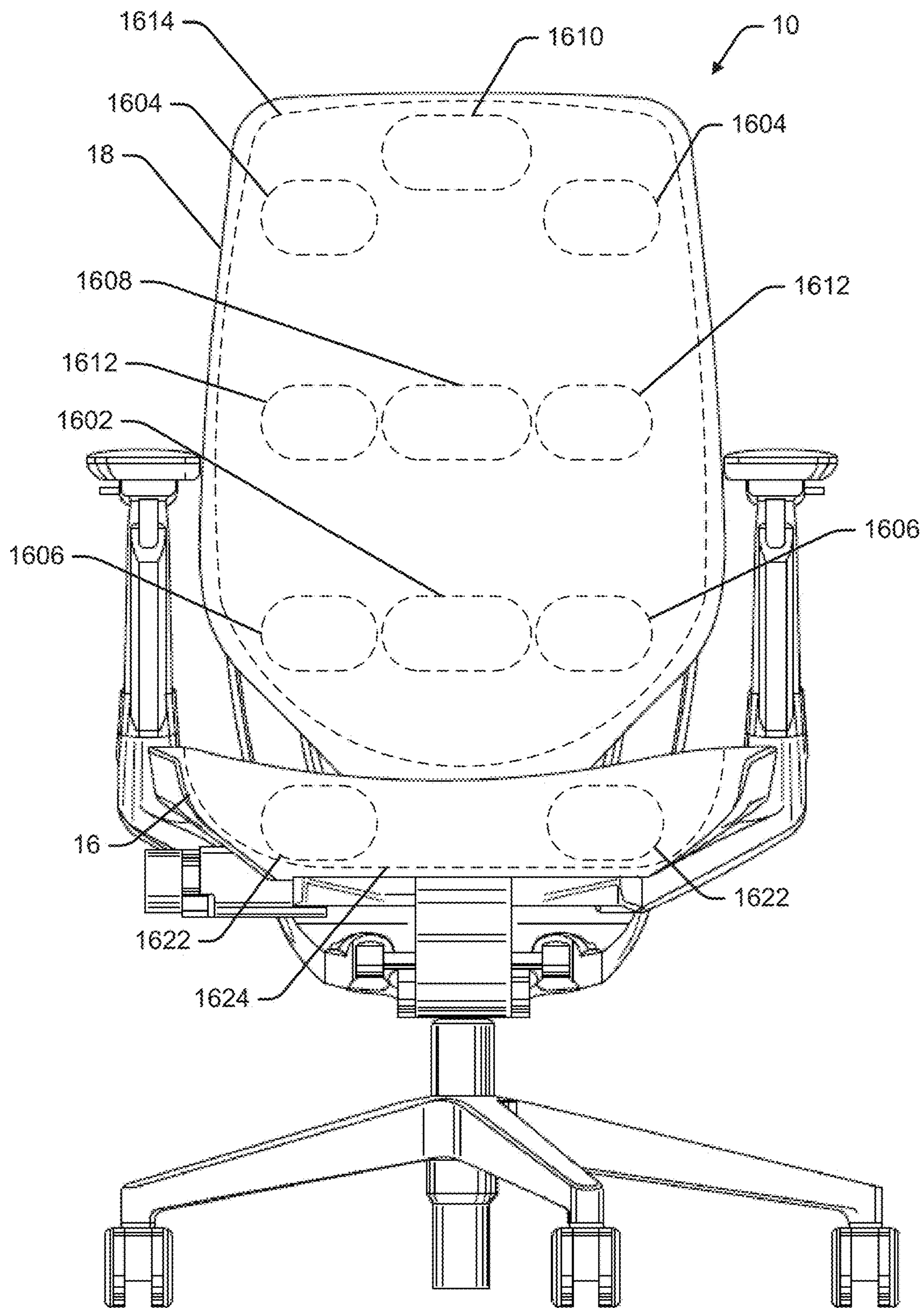


Fig. 34

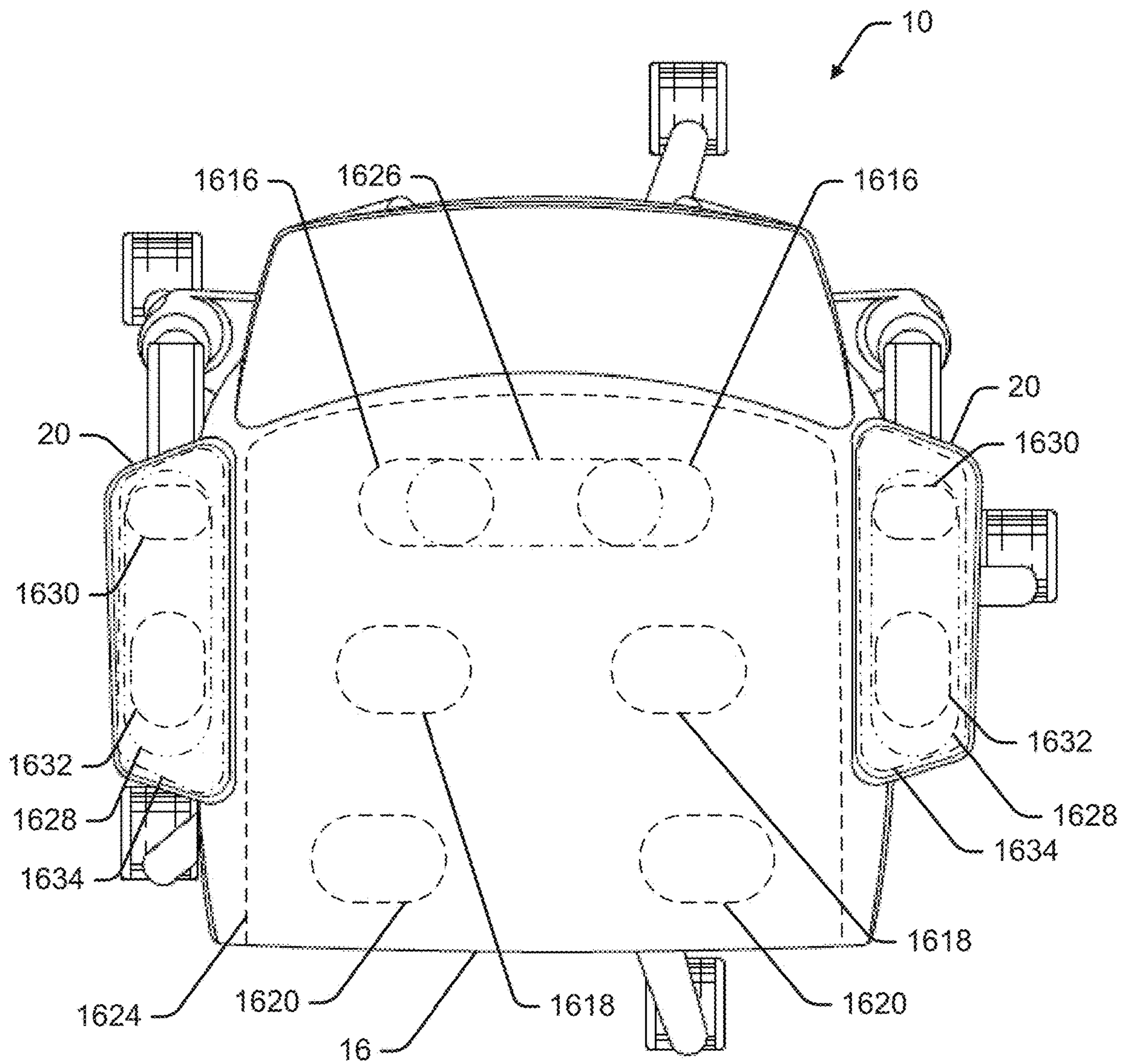


Fig. 35

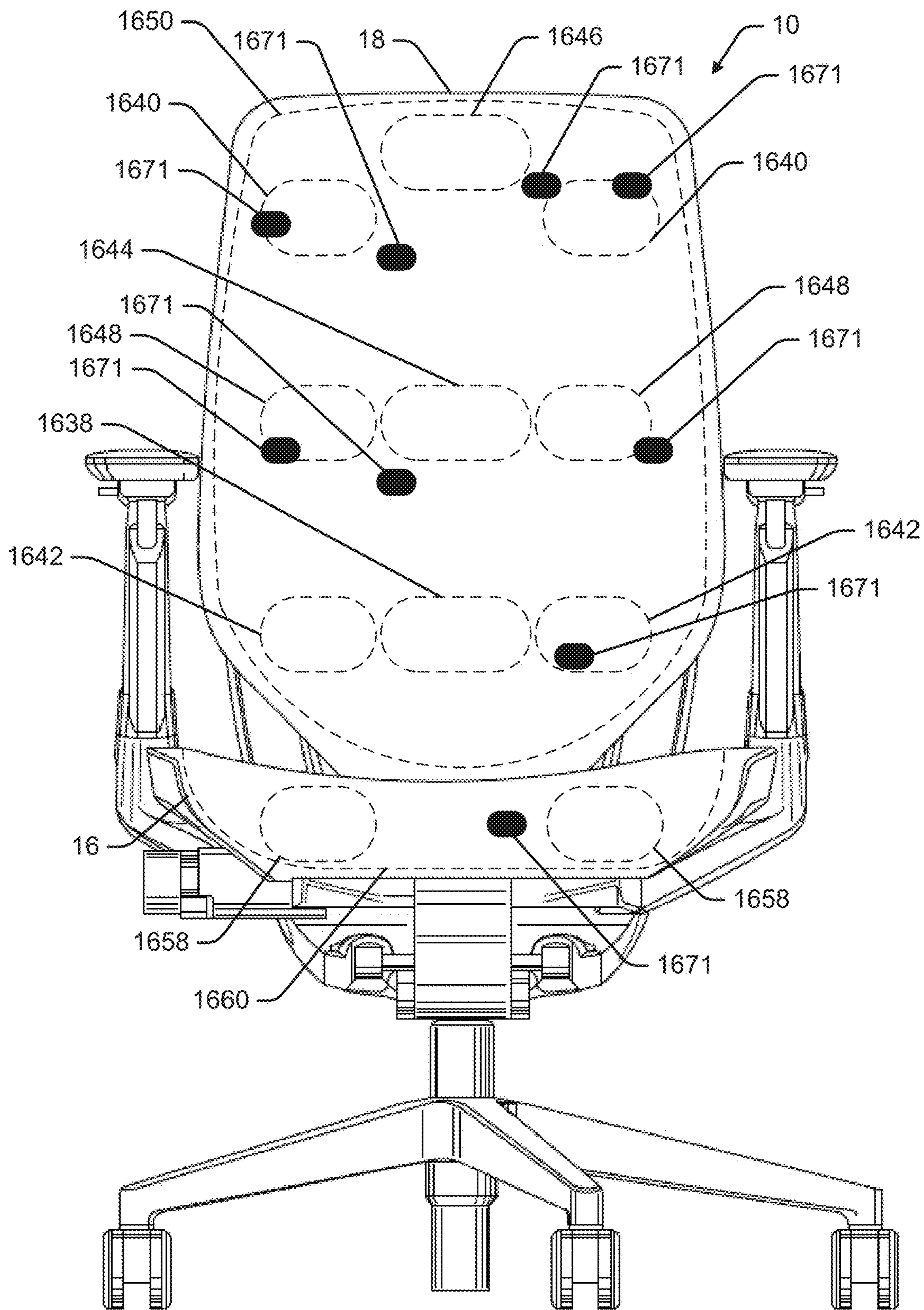


Fig. 36

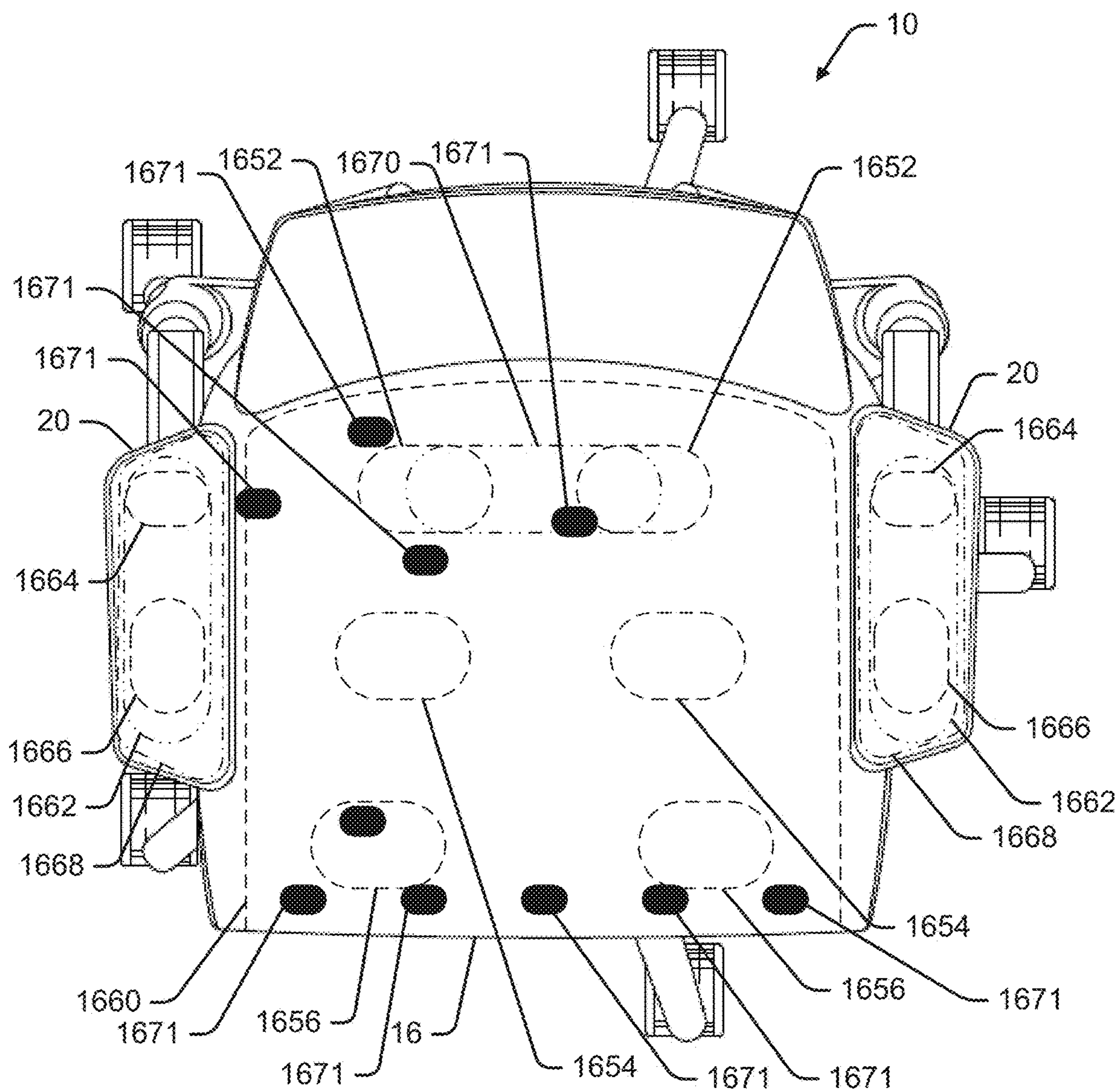


Fig. 37

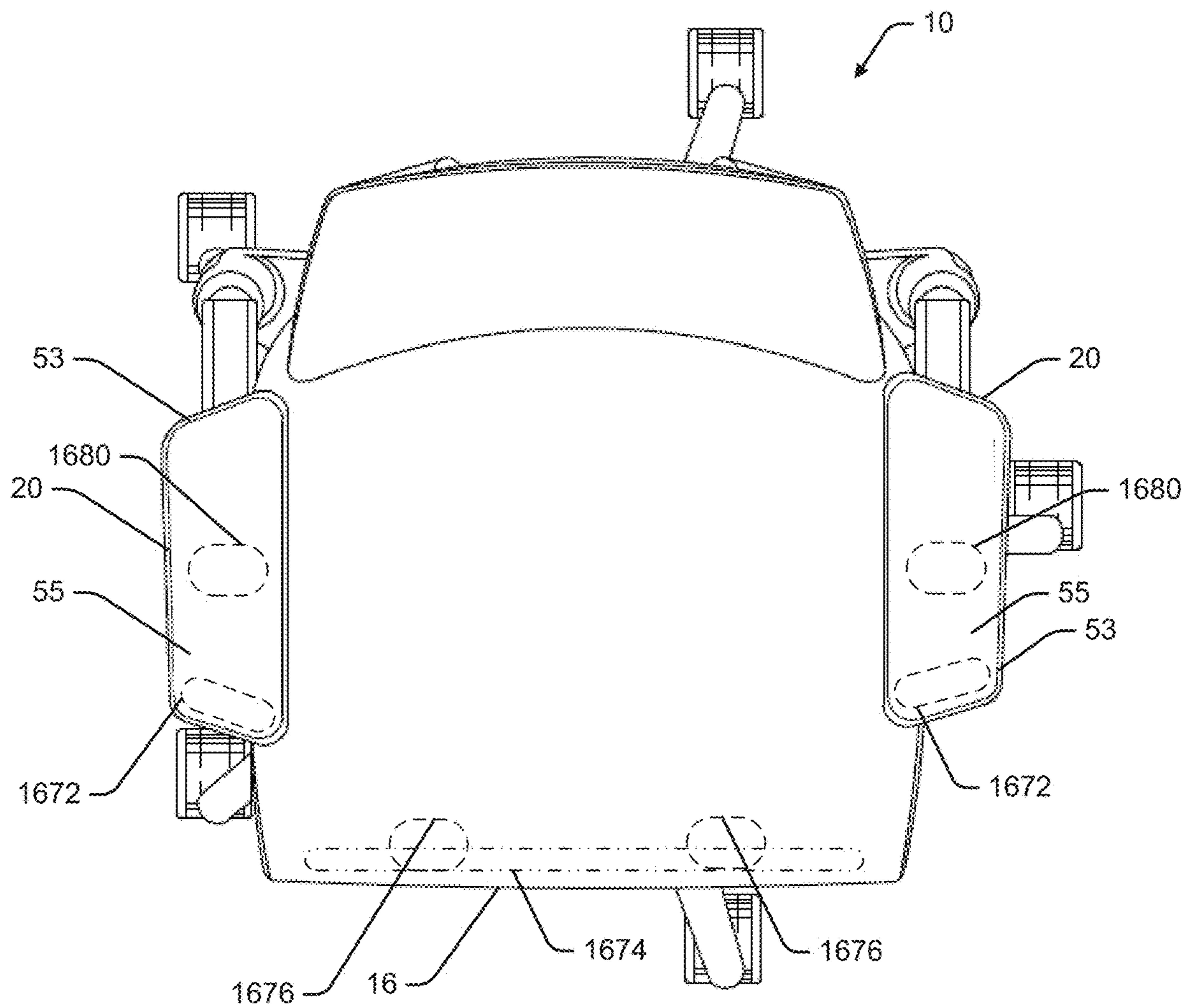


Fig. 38

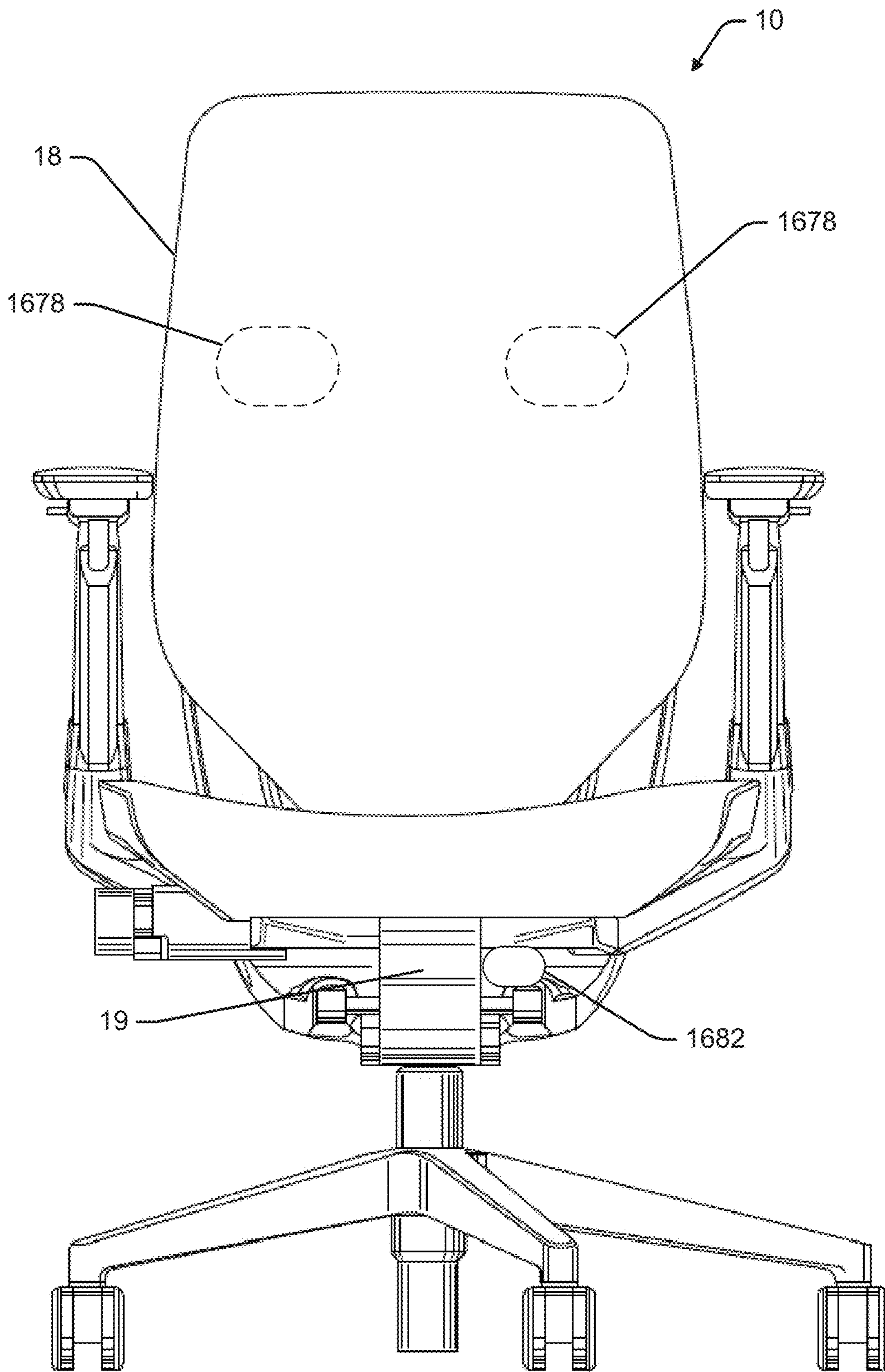


Fig. 39

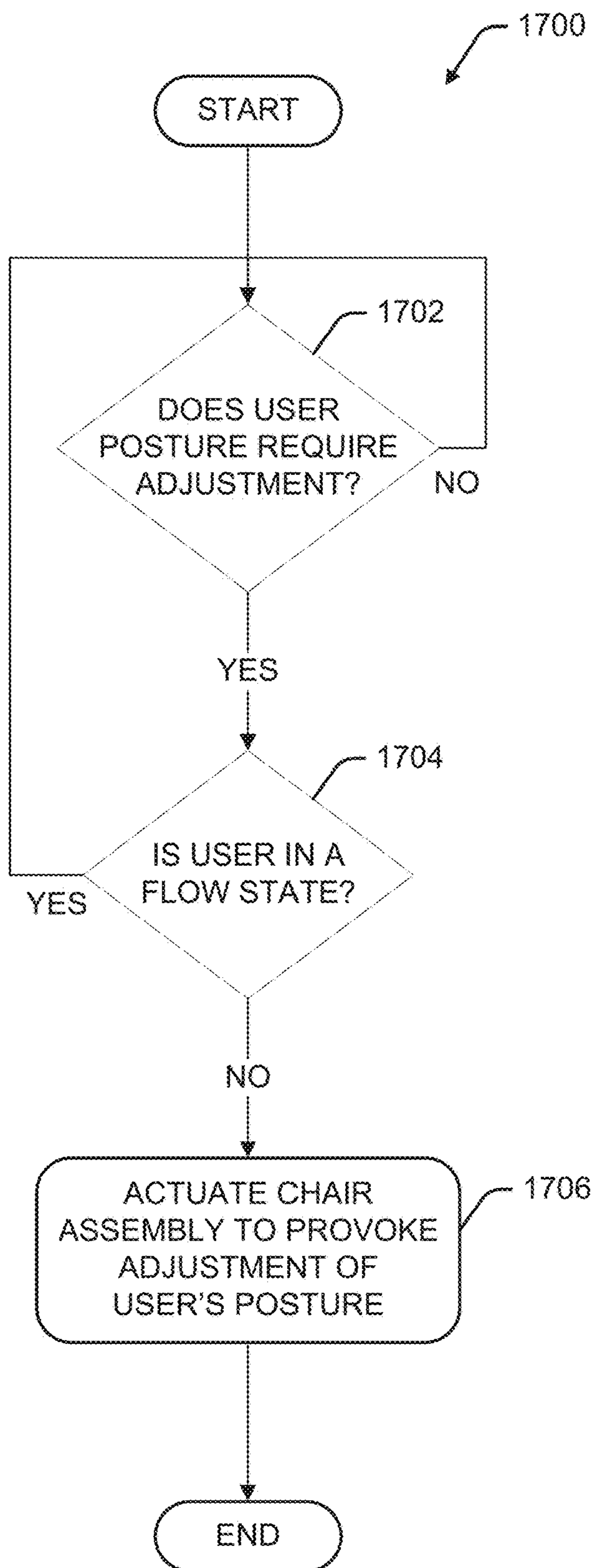


Fig. 40

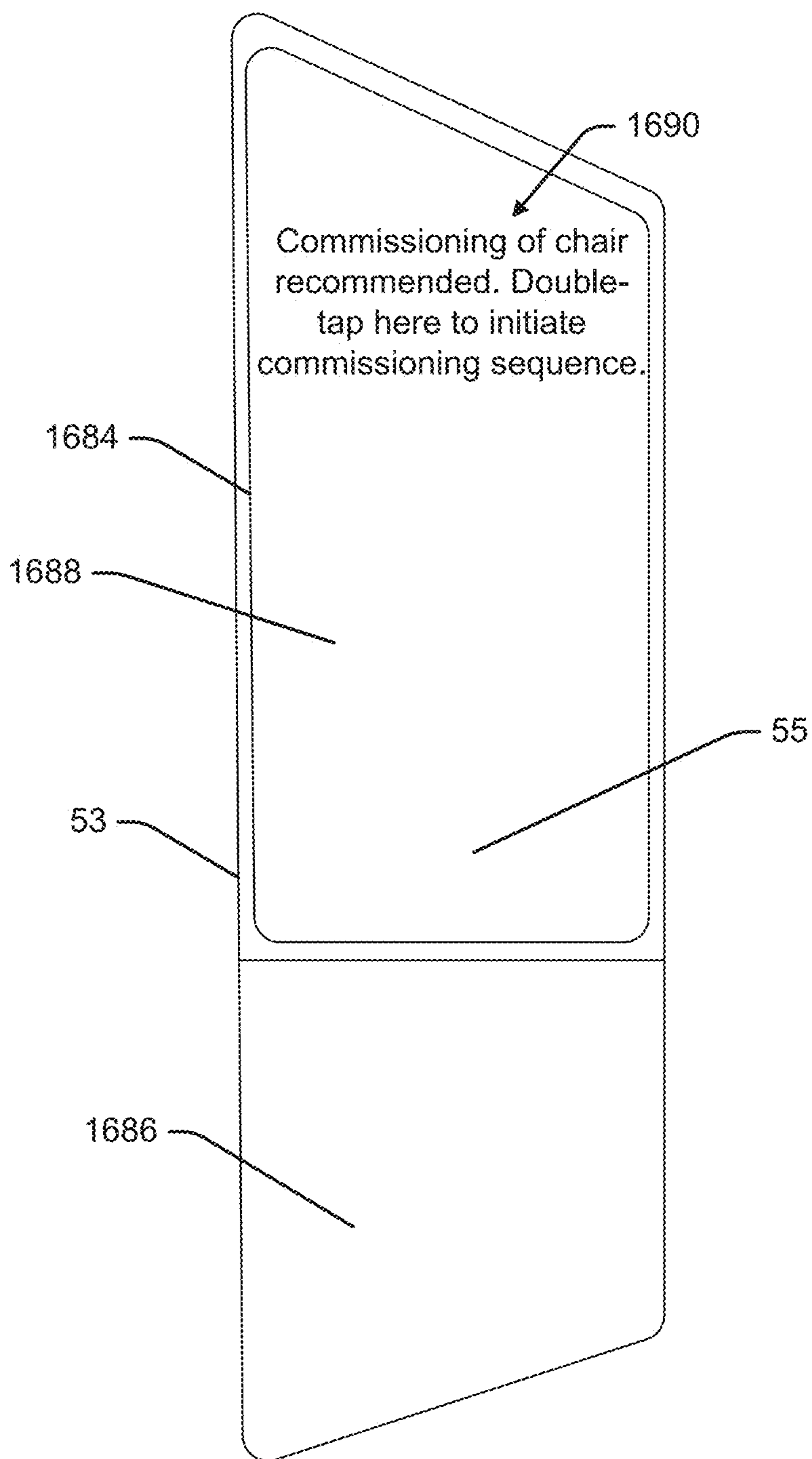


Fig. 41

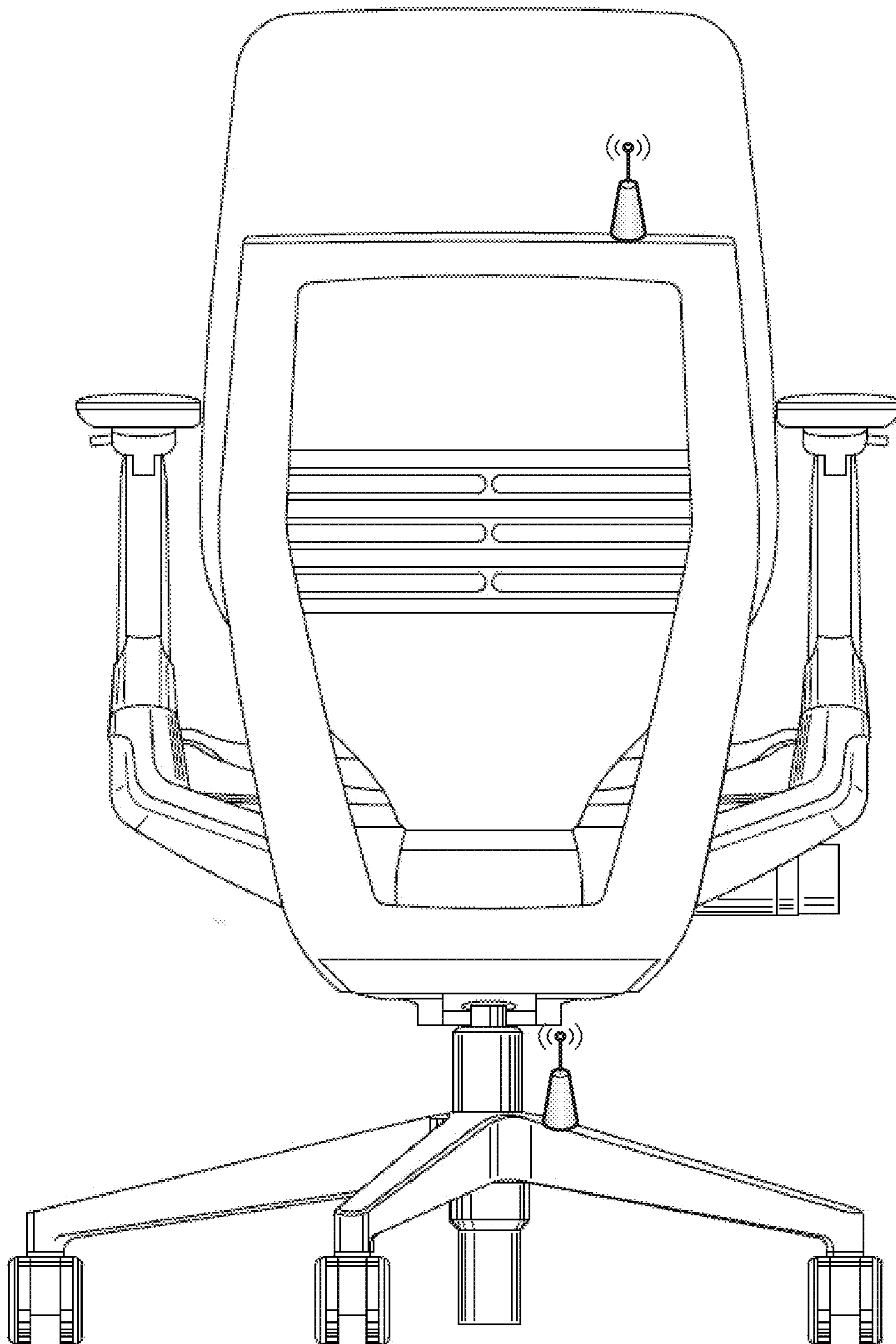


Fig. 42

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	Share w/ Facility & Manufacturer	Share w/ Facility	Do Not Share
Select All	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Maintenance Data	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Temperature Data	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
User Flow Data	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Power Management Data	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
User Posture Data	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Chair Alignment Data	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Occupancy Data	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
User Weight Data	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>

Fig. 43

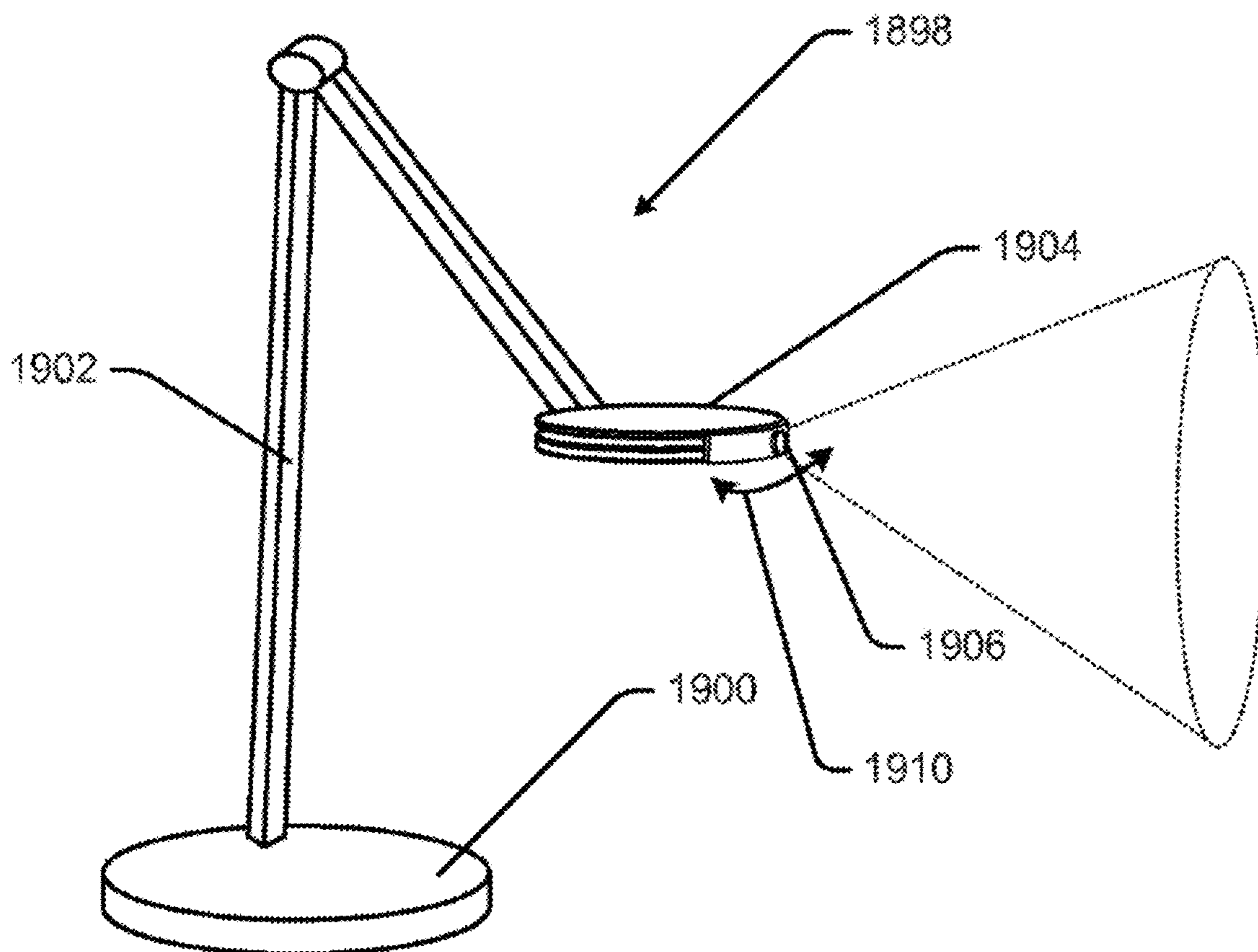


Fig. 44

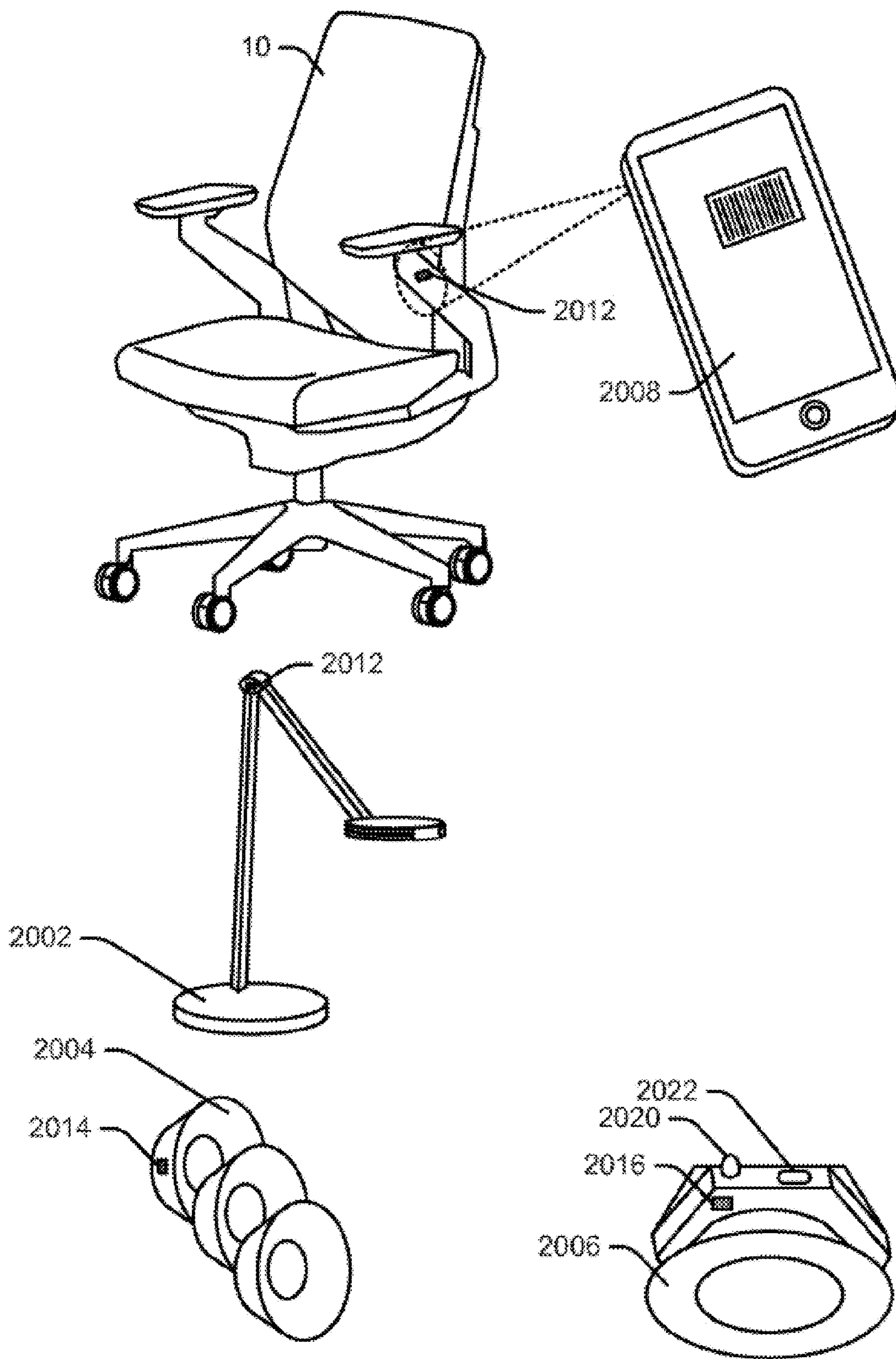


Fig. 45

MICROCLIMATE CONTROL SYSTEMS AND METHODS

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] This application is a continuation of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 15/634,027, filed Jun. 27, 2017, which claims priority to U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 62/355,167, filed Jun. 27, 2016, which also claims priority to and is a continuation-in-part of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 14/727,398, filed Jun. 1, 2015, which claims priority to U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 62/008,723, filed Jun. 6, 2014, 62/040,485, filed Aug. 22, 2014, and U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 62/106,040, filed Jan. 21, 2015. This application also claims priority to and is also a continuation-in-part of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 15/170,550, filed Jun. 1, 2016, which claims priority to U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 62/171,401, filed Jun. 5, 2015. U.S. patent application Ser. No. 15/634,027 is a continuation-in-part of U.S. Each of the above-referenced applications is incorporated herein in their entirety for all purposes.

FIELD OF THE DISCLOSURE

[0002] The field of the disclosure is temperature control, and more specifically, temperature control in furniture, other affordances, enclaves, and other shared environments. This disclosure also describes user interfaces for the convenient and efficient control of temperature.

BACKGROUND OF THE DISCLOSURE

[0003] Traditional climate control systems are bulk heating and cooling systems that control the climate of a facility based largely on thermostats which sense the temperature in specific locations and control the temperature based on simple temperature settings inputted at specific locations. Typically, an individual that is not comfortable with the bulk climate control for their facility has few options for achieving comfort. If the user generally finds the bulk climate control too cold, their current recourse is to wear heavier clothing, such as a sweater. If the user generally finds the bulk climate control too warm, their current recourse is to wear lighter clothing. In many cases, those accommodations require wearing clothing items that are not seasonally appropriate, such as wearing a heavy sweater in the summer because the air conditioning is too high or wearing a light t-shirt in the winter because the heating system is set too high. Accordingly, it would be useful to provide a user with an individually controllable microclimate, which the user can alter to enhance their comfort.

[0004] In addition to the user-specific issues described above, there are facility-wide shortcomings of traditional system. As one example, the bulk climate control of a facility is generally set to cater to a minority of users. The typical worker in a facility is not queried regarding whether the temperature suits them. Accordingly, a need exists for a heating and/or cooling solution that is more responsive to the typical user, rather than to a handful of users whose input is sought.

[0005] Finally, the current bulk systems have no means for determining if there is a more energy efficient way to heat and/or cool a facility. Currently, better energy efficiency is generally achieved by simply performing less heating or less

cooling, thereby saving energy. Accordingly, a need exists to provide systems that are capable of controlling user temperature experience with a larger variety of options, where the effects of that variety of options can be analyzed to determine the most energy efficient arrangement.

[0006] Systems exist for reservation of conference rooms and shared spaces. However, existing systems do not include options for controlling microclimates within these reserved spaces. Accordingly, it would be useful to provide a convenient reservation system where a user can pre-define a temperature control setting for use during the time that the user has reserved a given space or affordance.

[0007] To the extent that localized temperature control systems have existed, they have traditionally operated in isolation and do not share their operational status with a broader system for temperature control and user experience. For example, a heating pad can provide a localized heating effect but does not communicate with any broader temperature control systems. As another example, a fan can provide a localized cooling effect, but again, does not communicate with broader temperature control systems. Accordingly, it would be useful to provide a localized temperature control system that is integrated into a broader system for temperature control and user experience.

[0008] Thus, what is needed is a system that can overcome the aforementioned shortcomings and provide the advantages discussed above and throughout the present disclosure.

SUMMARY OF THE DISCLOSURE

[0009] In one aspect, the present disclosure provides a system and method for reservation and temperature control of a microclimate device. The system can be configured to execute the method, the method including one or more of the following steps: retrieving from a scheduling database, using a processor, a schedule for a microclimate device containing a heating and/or cooling device; communicating the schedule to a user; receiving an input from the user indicating a reservation of the affordance for a selected time; receiving from the user a temperature control setting for the heating and/or cooling device; and sending instructions to the heating and/or cooling device to execute the temperature control setting during the selected time.

[0010] In another aspect, the present disclosure provides a furniture item comprising a heating and/or cooling device and a user interface integrated into the furniture item and coupled to a processor, the user interface configured to receive a temperature control input from a user and to provide the temperature control input to the processor, the processor configured to control the heating and/or cooling device to execute the temperature control input.

[0011] These and other objects, advantages and aspects of the invention will become apparent from the following description. In the description, reference is made to the accompanying drawings which form a part hereof, and in which there is shown a preferred embodiment of the invention. Such embodiment does not necessarily represent the full scope of the invention and reference is made therefore, to the claims herein for interpreting the scope of the invention.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0012] FIG. 1 is a user interface, in accordance with an aspect of the present disclosure.

[0013] FIG. 2 is a user interface, in accordance with an aspect of the present disclosure.

[0014] FIG. 3 is a user interface, in accordance with an aspect of the present disclosure.

[0015] FIG. 4 is a user interface, in accordance with an aspect of the present disclosure.

[0016] FIG. 5 is a user interface, in accordance with an aspect of the present disclosure.

[0017] FIG. 6 is a user interface, in accordance with an aspect of the present disclosure.

[0018] FIG. 7 is a chair assembly, in accordance with an aspect of the present disclosure.

[0019] FIG. 8 is a chair assembly, in accordance with an aspect of the present disclosure.

[0020] FIG. 9 is a chair assembly, in accordance with an aspect of the present disclosure.

[0021] FIG. 10 is a chair assembly, in accordance with an aspect of the present disclosure.

[0022] FIG. 11 is a chair assembly, in accordance with an aspect of the present disclosure.

[0023] FIG. 12 is a chair assembly, in accordance with an aspect of the present disclosure.

[0024] FIG. 13 is a schematic of an electronic configuration of a chair assembly, user-based processor, and facility-based processor, in accordance with an aspect of the present disclosure.

[0025] FIG. 14 is workspace including a chair assembly, in accordance with an aspect of the present disclosure.

[0026] FIG. 15 is a chair assembly, in accordance with an aspect of the present disclosure.

[0027] FIG. 16 is a chair assembly, in accordance with an aspect of the present disclosure.

[0028] FIG. 17 is a chair assembly, in accordance with an aspect of the present disclosure.

[0029] FIG. 18 is a schematic of the electronic configuration of a chair assembly, in accordance with an aspect of the present disclosure.

[0030] FIG. 19 is a schematic of the electronic configuration of a chair assembly, in accordance with an aspect of the present disclosure.

[0031] FIG. 20 is a schematic of the electronic configuration of a chair assembly, in accordance with an aspect of the present disclosure.

[0032] FIG. 21 is a chair assembly located in front of a work surface having various sensors thereon, in accordance with an aspect of the present disclosure.

[0033] FIG. 22 is a chair assembly having motors in an upper and lower portion of the back assembly, in accordance with an aspect of the present disclosure.

[0034] FIG. 23 illustrates a system for providing information to a user of an article of furniture in accordance with a particular embodiment.

[0035] FIG. 24 illustrates a diagram of various details of a system for providing information to a user in accordance with another embodiment.

[0036] FIG. 25 illustrates a system for providing information to a user in accordance with another embodiment.

[0037] FIG. 26 illustrates a method for providing information to a user in accordance with another embodiment.

[0038] FIG. 27 illustrates a diagram of various details about information collected within a system for providing information to a user in accordance with another embodiment.

[0039] FIG. 28 illustrates a system for providing information to a user in accordance with another embodiment.

[0040] FIG. 29 illustrates a method for providing information to a user in accordance with another embodiment.

[0041] FIG. 30 illustrates a system for providing information to a user in accordance with another embodiment.

[0042] FIG. 31 illustrates a method for providing information to a user in accordance with another embodiment.

[0043] FIG. 32 illustrates a system for providing information to a user in accordance with another embodiment.

[0044] FIG. 33 illustrates a method for providing information to a user in accordance with another embodiment.

[0045] FIG. 34 is a chair assembly, in accordance with an aspect of the present disclosure.

[0046] FIG. 35 is a chair assembly, in accordance with an aspect of the present disclosure.

[0047] FIG. 36 is a chair assembly, in accordance with an aspect of the present disclosure.

[0048] FIG. 37 is a chair assembly, in accordance with an aspect of the present disclosure.

[0049] FIG. 38 is a chair assembly, in accordance with an aspect of the present disclosure.

[0050] FIG. 39 is a chair assembly, in accordance with an aspect of the present disclosure.

[0051] FIG. 40 is a flowchart showing a method of determining whether or not to adjust a user's posture based on the user's flow state.

[0052] FIG. 41 is an armrest with a touchscreen located on a front portion, in accordance with an aspect of the present disclosure.

[0053] FIG. 42 is a chair assembly, in accordance with an aspect of the present disclosure.

[0054] FIG. 43 is an illustration of an portable device app for controlling the sharing of data with certain entities, in accordance with an aspect of the present disclosure.

[0055] FIG. 44 is a perspective view of an exemplary desk lamp that includes a built in camera or other type of sensor device.

[0056] FIG. 45 is a schematic view illustrating various office resources that include identification tags readable via a smart phone device to form a local network of things controllable together to provide an integrated experience.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE DISCLOSURE

Microclimate Devices

[0057] While parts of this disclosure focus on aspects relating to a chair assembly 10, it is contemplated that many of the features described herein can be deployed in other types of furniture, such as the following non-limiting examples: a couch, a bed, a table, a cart, a monitor assembly, a projection screen assembly, a footrest or ottoman, and the like. In addition, features described herein can be deployed in various other affordances, such as panels (such as space dividers, modesty panels, and the like), wall hangings (such as art work, mirrors, picture frames, and the like), floor mats, and the like. The furniture and other affordances containing a heating and/or cooling device are referred to herein as "microclimate devices". The microclimate devices can be deployed in a variety of environments, including office, home, medical, hoteling, and other contexts, including those described elsewhere herein.

[0058] This disclosure provides systems and methods for user- or space-specific temperature control. Aspects of the present disclosure that are described with respect to heating are applicable to cooling, unless the context clearly dictates otherwise. Aspects of the present disclosure that are described with respect to cooling are applicable to heating, unless the context clearly dictates otherwise. Aspects of the present disclosure that are described with respect to heating or cooling are applicable to combined heating and cooling, unless the context clearly dictates otherwise. Where a generic sensing module or sensor is described in the present disclosure, a temperature sensor is expressly contemplated. Where a generic application module or actuator is described in the present disclosure, a heating and/or cooling device is expressly contemplated. Where a feature module is described, a temperature sensor and/or heating and/or cooling device are expressly contemplated.

[0059] The systems and methods described can be used with a variety of plug-and-play heating and/or cooling devices. For example, suitable heating and/or cooling devices include those described in International Patent Application Pub. No. WO 2016/077843, which is incorporated herein in its entirety by reference. Other suitable heating and/or cooling devices can include far-infrared heaters, high thermal conductivity materials and corresponding heating/cooling elements, and the like. Heating and/or cooling devices can include various fans and the like in order to distribute air to enhance the desired thermal effect. Unless the context clearly dictates otherwise, the heating and/or cooling devices described herein can include conductive or radiative heating and/or cooling devices.

[0060] Referring to FIGS. 1-6, a variety of views of a user interface 3002 for use with a heating and/or cooling device are illustrated. FIG. 1 shows a workspace reservation screen. FIG. 2 shows a user interface 3002 for control of constant application of temperature using a heating and/or cooling device. FIG. 3 shows a user interface 3002 for control of time-varying application of temperature using a heating and/or cooling device. FIG. 4 shows a user interface 3002 for selecting a setting for constant application of temperature from a list of favorite settings. FIG. 5 shows a scheduling aspect of a user interface 3002. FIG. 6 shows a user interface 3002 for selecting a setting for constant or time-varying application of temperature using a heating and/or cooling device.

[0061] Referring to FIG. 1, a user interface 3002 is provided for reservations of furniture and/or workspaces in a facility. The user interface 3002 can include a current reservation section 3004, which identifies the microclimate device that the user currently has reserved. The current reservation section 3004 can include a current temperature control button 3006 that, when selected, directs the user to a portion of the user interface 3002 where temperature can be controlled (for example, the user interface 3002 of FIG. 2). The current reservation section can include the name 3008 of the currently-reserved microclimate device. The current reservation section can include the time window 3010 for the current reservation. The current reservation section can include an image 3012 of the currently-reserved microclimate device. The user interface 3002 can include an upcoming reservations section 3014, which shows the upcoming (and optionally current) reservations for the user. The upcoming reservations section 3014 identifies the microclimate device that is reserved by name 3016 and

image 3018, the timing of the reservation 3020, and provides the temperature control settings 3022 that have been selected for the given reservation. The user interface 3002 can include a new reservations section 3024, where a user can make a new reservation. The new reservations section 3024 can include an identifier 3026 of microclimate devices (for example, an image, a name, or the like) that are available for reservation. The new reservations section 3024 can include one or more new reservation buttons 3028 that, when selected, direct the user to a new reservation screen (for example, the user interface 3002 of FIG. 5). The user interface 3002 can include a personalized message 3030.

[0062] Referring to FIG. 2, the user interface 3002 is shown in constant temperature application control mode. In this mode, the user can set a temperature for application by one or more heating and/or cooling devices that is constant and not time-varying. In the illustrated embodiment, two heating and/or cooling devices are being controlled: one for a seat of a chair and one for a back of a chair. The user interface 3002 can include a location identifier 3032, which in the illustrated aspect takes the form of a schematic of a seating device with an arrow pointing to the location of the heating and/or cooling device. As should be apparent, the control on the left is for controlling the heating and/or cooling device located in the seat of the chair and the control on the right is for controlling the heating and/or cooling device located in the back of the chair. The location identifier 3032 can take many forms, including the illustrated schematic form, an actual image, a word identifier, or other forms that make the location of the heating and/or cooling device apparent to a user. The user interface 3002 includes a heating and/or cooling device constant temperature control 3034. Each heating and/or cooling device can have its own constant temperature control or a single global control can coordinate the heating and/or cooling of all of the heating and/or cooling devices. In this case, the location identifier 3032 is associated with a given control 3034 by virtue of its placement above the control 3034. The constant temperature control 3034 can include a heating identifier 3036 and/or a cooling identifier 3038 to identify to a user whether they are actuating a heating effect or a cooling effect. In the illustrated embodiment, the heating identifier 3036 is a clipart sun and the cooling identifier 3038 is a clipart snowflake. The constant temperature control 3034 can include an "off" button 3040 for stopping the application of heat and/or cool from the heating and/or cooling device. The constant temperature control 3034 can include one or more current setting indicators 3042 that indicate the current setting of the heating and/or cooling device. The current setting indicators 3042 can take a variety of forms, as discussed below. In the illustrated aspect, the current setting indicators 3042 are a set of lights that illuminate to indicate the degree of heating or cooling. If the heating or cooling setting is higher, more lights are illuminated. The color of the lights can be associated with the effect that they represent (i.e., the heating lights are red and the cooling lights are blue). The current setting for the illustrated aspect is a heating level in the seat of the chair at a level of 4 out of 4 and a cooling level in the back of the seat of the chair at a level of 3 out of 4. The user interface 3002 can include a favorites button 3043 for opening a screen for selecting settings from a set of saved favorite settings (for example, the user interface 3002 of FIG. 4).

[0063] Referring to FIG. 3, the user interface 3002 is shown in time-varying temperature application control mode. In this mode, the user can set a time-varying temperature pattern for application by one or more heating and/or cooling devices. In the illustrated embodiment, the same two heating and/or cooling devices are being controlled as shown in FIG. 2, namely, one for the seat of the chair and one for the back of the chair. The user interface 3002 can include the location identifier 3032 described above. The user interface 3002 can include one or more selectable time-varying patterns 3044 and a corresponding selector 3046 for each. As should be apparent, the dotted line indicates the time-varying pattern for the seat of the chair and the solid line indicates the time-varying pattern for the back of the chair. The time-varying patterns 3044 can include a means of identifying the type and degree of heating and/or cooling. In the illustrated case, the type of heating and/or cooling is identified by color, where blue indicates cooling, red indicates heating, and gray indicates neither, and the degree of heating and/or cooling is indicated by the height of the time-varying pattern 3044 and the “deepness” of color of the time-varying pattern 3044. The time-varying pattern 3044 can be generated by methods described elsewhere herein and can take forms described elsewhere herein.

[0064] Referring to FIG. 4, the user interface 3002 is shown in favorite selection mode, which can be activated by, for example, pushing the favorites button 3043 of FIG. 2. A set of preferred settings 3048 can be saved by a user as favorites. The preferred settings 3048 can have location identifiers 3032 and setting indicators 3050. The preferred settings 3048 are, from top to bottom: a cooling effect in the seat at a level of 1 out of 4 and a heating effect in the back at a level of 3 out of 4; a heating effect in the seat at a level of 4 out of 4 and a heating effect in the back at a level of 4 out of 4; a heating effect in the seat at a level of 2 out of 4 and a cooling effect in the back at a level of 4 out of 4, a cooling effect in the seat at a level of 3 out of 4 and a cooling effect in the back at a level of 3 out of 4; neither a heating nor cooling effect in the seat (i.e., a heating/cooling effect at a level of 0 out of 4) and a heating effect in the back at a level of 2 out of 4. The favorites can be manually set up by a user or automatically populated based on historic usage.

[0065] Referring to FIG. 5, a user interface 3002 is shown in microclimate device reservation mode. The user interface 3002 can include a plurality of time slots 3052. The user interface 3002 can include an availability (or non-availability) indicator 3054. In this case, a non-availability indicator 3054 is shown as a check mark. In some cases, non-availability can be indicated by simply removing the unavailable time slot.

[0066] Referring to FIG. 6, a user interface 3002 is shown in temperature select mode. This mode combines features of the favorite selection mode and the time-varying temperature application control mode. The user interface 3002 can include a constant application selection section 3056 and a time-varying application selection section 3058. The constant application selection section 3056 can include favorites with features similar to those described above with respect to FIG. 4. The time-varying application selection section 3058 can include time-varying sequences with features similar to those described above with respect to FIG. 3.

[0067] A heating and/or cooling device can be positioned in a variety of locations within the above-referenced furniture and other affordances based on the desired heating

and/or cooling effect. For example, if a heating and/or cooling effect is desired on the wrist of a user, then the heating and/or cooling device can be positioned in the armcaps of a chair, at the edge of a desk where a keyboard is intended to be positioned, at the edge of a device holder, such as a tablet mount, and the like. If a heating and/or cooling effect is desired in the area where a user's legs are positioned while using a workstation (in other words, the space under a desk that a user's legs occupy), then the heating and/or cooling device can be positioned on the underside of a worksurface, on the inner surface of a modesty panel, on the inner surface of a side wall of the workstation, in a floor mat positioned under the workstation, or the like. If a heating and/or cooling effect is desired for a user's head, then a heating and/or cooling device can be positioned in a headrest of a chair, in a canopy that at least partially encompasses the space surrounding a user's head, or the like.

[0068] If a user-selectable heating and/or cooling effect is desired for a user's hands or feet, then a heating and/or cooling device can be positioned where a user is not contacting them in normal operation, but where a user can move their hands or feet to engage the heating and/or cooling device. For example, a heating and/or cooling device can be positioned on the underside of a chair seat and a user can place their hands on the heating and/or cooling device to receive the desired heating and/or cooling effect. As another example, a pair of handpockets containing one or more heating and/or cooling devices can be positioned in a location convenient for a user to engage with their hands, for example, alongside a seating surface, such that a user can place their hands into the pockets to receive the desired heating and/or cooling effect to their hands. Similarly, one or a pair of footpockets containing one or more heating and/or cooling devices can be positioned in a location convenient for a user to engage with their feet, for example, in a sidewall of an ottoman, such that a user can place one or both of their feet into the pockets to receive the desired heating and/or cooling effect to their feet.

[0069] If a modular heating and/or cooling effect is desired, then a detachable device containing a material that can be effectively “charged” with heat and/or cold by a heating and/or cooling device is contemplated. For example, a blanket made of a material that retains hot and/or cold can be thermally coupled to a heating and/or cooling device that is located in one of the aforementioned furniture items or other affordances. The heating and/or cooling device can raise or lower the temperature of the blanket. A user can then remove the blanket from the heating and/or cooling device and use the blanket for the desired heating and/or cooling effect. The blanket can also work in cooperation with other heating and/or cooling devices to enhance their effects.

[0070] In all cases of choosing location for a heating and/or cooling device, the choice of location can be based on the best available medical knowledge and/or academic research. Thus, for example, if medical research emerges indicating advantages for providing selective heating and/or cooling to a particular portion of a user's body, then the heating and/or cooling device can be positioned to provide a heating and/or cooling effect to that particular portion of the user's body.

[0071] The heating and/or cooling devices described herein can be controlled by a user interface 3002 (see, FIGS. 1-6). The user interface 3002 can take a variety of forms,

including but not limited to, touch screens, capacitive touch interfaces, buttons, dials, sliders, gesture recognition and interpretation, voice recognition and interpretation, biosensors, and the like. The user interface **3002** can be located on or integrated into the microclimate device itself or remote from the microclimate device. When located remote from the microclimate device, the user interface **3002** can be located on a mobile device, a tablet, a computer, a desk, or the like. The user interface **3002** is described in greater detail above and below.

[0072] In certain aspects, the user interface **3002** can include a numeric display for identifying the set point for the heating and/or cooling device. The numeric display can show the temperature set point of the heating and/or cooling device. The numeric display can display an arbitrary number related to the relative heating and/or cooling setting, such as a scale of 1 to 10. For example, referring to FIG. 4, the setting indicator **3050** can be a number.

[0073] Referring to FIG. 2, the user interface **3002** can have a series of ascending and descending symbols, where the ascending symbols correspond to an increased temperature and the descending symbols correspond to a decreased temperature. The higher/lower symbols can correspond to a higher/lower temperature. In addition, the symbols can increase in size corresponding to the degree of their effect. For example, for a heating device having four heat level settings, the first heating level is above the center, nearest to the center, and the smallest symbol, the second heating level is above the center, second nearest to the center, and the second smallest symbol, the third heating level is above the center, third nearest to the center, and the third smallest symbol, and the fourth heating level is above the center, farthest from the center, and the biggest symbol. Other arrangements are contemplated and this particular description is exemplary only.

[0074] In certain aspects, each heating and/or cooling device can have a unique indicator and/or control. As one example, if a chair has a heating and/or cooling device located in the seat portion of the chair and another heating and/or cooling device located in the back portion of the chair, the user interface can have two controls, one each for the seat device and the back device. The specific device that each control corresponds to can be identified by words or graphically by displaying, for example, a chair and indicating where the particular device is located on the chair.

[0075] The user interface can use colors to identify the desired and/or programmed heating/cooling effect. For example, a number (such as 5 out of 10) displayed in red can indicate a heating level, whereas a number displayed in blue can indicate a cooling level.

[0076] The user interface can be an audio interface. For example, a user can speak to a microphone an instruction phrase, such as “heat element, set to level 5” to set the heating of a heating and/or cooling device to a given level. The heating and/or cooling device can confirm that the device has been set to the given level by displaying a confirmation or by providing an audio confirmation.

[0077] The user interface can be a gesture interface. For example, a user can provide a hand signal that indicates heat adjustment and then a second hand signal that indicates increase. The user interface can be a combination of audio and gesture interfaces, where a user can instruct heating and simply point to the location in the microclimate device that they would like to have the instruction executed. For

example, a user can point to the seat of their chair and provide an instruction to provide heating.

[0078] The user interface can have an option for a user to save a given setting for easy recall at a later point in time. For example, if a user always sets their back heat level to 3 of 4 and their seat heat level to 1 of 4 in the early afternoon, the user can save this setting as “Early Afternoon” for easy recall, rather than having to manually set the heat levels of the various heating and/or cooling devices.

[0079] The heating and/or cooling device can apply heating and cooling in a variety of heating and cooling sequences. Examples include, but are not limited to, constant application, alternating heat and cold, a “step function” application, a slow ramping up/down of temperature, a “blast function” application where a very fast burst of heat or cold is applied, and the like. Various sequences can be configured to work in coordination between two or more heating and/or cooling devices. Examples of the heating and/or cooling sequences include the time-varying patterns **3044** shown in FIG. 3.

[0080] The heating/cooling sequence can be selected from a pre-defined set of sequences or can be defined by the user via the user interface. In the user-defined embodiment, the user can define the sequence by clicking and dragging a linear representation of the temperature over time, can draw the sequence on a touch screen, can select locations for heating/cooling on the touch screen, or the like.

[0081] The heating/cooling sequences can be defined according to the best available medical knowledge or academic research. If particularly beneficial heating/cooling sequences are identified, then the present disclosure contemplates their use in the microclimate devices described herein.

[0082] The heating and/or cooling device can have safety precautions that prevent overheating and overcooling. In one aspect, the control processor can be configured with information regarding the maximum/minimum temperature and time settings for safe usage (i.e., the temperature and time below/above which pain, damage, injury, or the like might occur) and can automatically adjust the heating/cooling sequence to prevent negative effects. In some cases, if the heating and/or cooling device exceeds the safety threshold, the heating and/or cooling device can be automatically shut off or reversed to provide the opposite effect (i.e., if heating exceeds the safety threshold, then apply cooling, and if cooling exceeds the safety threshold, then apply heating).

[0083] As described below, the microclimate device can have features for a user to identify the specific microclimate device and for the microclimate device (or an associated processor) to identify the user.

[0084] One example of a feature for identification of the microclimate device and/or the user is a user identification badge that can be swiped or otherwise interfaced (RF identification, etc.) with the microclimate device to identify the user.

[0085] The microclimate device can have an authentication code located on it for a user to scan to establish the identification. The authentication code can be a password, a QR code, or the like. The authentication code can be permanently located on the microclimate device, such that the code never changes. Alternately, the authentication code can be configured to change after a given period of time, so that a user must enter or scan the authentication code that is displayed at a given time in order to associate with the

microclimate device. As an example, a display screen on the microclimate device can provide a QR code that rotates every 5 minutes. When a user approaches the microclimate device, the user can scan the QR code with their mobile device, thereby associating the mobile device with the microclimate device.

[0086] The microclimate device and the user can associate with one another via various wireless signals and location techniques. For example, an application on a mobile device could sense proximity relative to the microclimate device and can activate control of the microclimate device via the application when the mobile device is within a certain radius of the microclimate device. As a more specific example, if the microclimate device is an enclave, the application could be activated when the application senses that the mobile device has entered the enclave.

[0087] Yet another means of associating user and microclimate device includes biometric authentication, such as finger print identification, retinal scanning, monitoring for some characteristic property, such as heart rate, blood vessel structure, and the like, or other biometric techniques known to those having ordinary skill in the biometric identification arts.

[0088] An additional means of associating user and microclimate device can be a display that allows a user to identify themselves, through a registration and/or login procedure. The display can route the user to a webportal or other similar local application and the user can identify themselves via the webportal.

[0089] The heating and/or cooling devices can be used in combination with a reservation system for reserving use of the microclimate device. For example, a work enclave that can be reserved via a reservation system can also have a heating/cooling program selected for operation during the reservation time. If a user selects the enclave for use between 1 PM and 2 PM, the user can select a heating/cooling regimen for use at the time of making the reservation.

[0090] The heating and/or cooling devices can be used with one or more of the occupancy sensing methods described herein. Upon sensing occupancy, many actions can be taken automatically by the heating and/or cooling device.

[0091] The heating and/or cooling device can automatically cool a seat after sensing that occupancy has ended. A user can configure the heating and/or cooling device to heat or cool a chair, a space, or another microclimate device when the space has been unoccupied for a defined length of time. A processor can periodically monitor occupancy and determine if the chair, space, or other microclimate device has been unoccupied for longer than the defined length of time. If the processor determines that the chair, space, or other microclimate device has been unoccupied for longer than the defined length of time, then a heating or cooling routine is automatically initiated. In some contexts, users might prefer a pre-warming effect, so the automatic routine is a heating routine. In other contexts, users might prefer a pre-cooling effect, so the automatic routine is a cooling routine. The automatic routine can heat or cool back to a neutral/room temperature or can heat or cool beyond the neutral/room temperature.

[0092] The heating and/or cooling devices can be used with one or more of the behavior adjusting methods described herein. For example, if an occupancy sensor

determines that a user has been sitting for a period that is longer than a pre-defined time period, then a processor can trigger the heating and/or cooling devices to provide heat and/or cooling with the purpose of prompting the user to stand up. As another example, described in detail below, the heating and/or cooling devices can be used to prompt a user to adopt better seated posture.

[0093] The heating and/or cooling devices can be used with one or more of the temperature sensing methods described herein. A user's core temperature or surface temperature, the temperature of immediately surrounding air, or other temperature measurement can prompt the automatic application of heat and/or cool. If the user's core temperature is measured higher than a pre-defined value, the heating and/or cooling device can be automatically prompted to provide a cooling effect. The opposite effect can be provided if a low core temperature is measured.

[0094] A user's temperature can be measured in a variety of ways, including a swallowed core temperature probe, a temperature probe in earbuds or earphones, a remote temperature probe such as a thermal camera, and other temperature probes described herein or known to those having ordinary skill in the art.

[0095] The heating and/or cooling devices can be used with a method of measuring a given state in a user, such as awareness, drowsiness, stress, productivity, flow, or the like. In some cases, these states might be preferred and in other cases, these states might be desirable to avoid. For example, drowsiness is desirable if a user is attempting to take a nap, but is undesirable if a user is attempting to perform work. Where the state is a preferred state, the heating and/or cooling device can be prompted to provide heating and/or cooling in an effort to help the user attain the state or remain in the state. For example, if a user is sensed to be non-drowsy, and the user is attempting to take a nap, the heating and/or cooling device can be prompted to provide a heating effect in an effort to induce drowsiness in the user. Where the state is an unpreferred state, the heating and/or cooling device can be prompted to provide heating and/or cooling in an effort to help the user break out of the state or stay out of the state. For example, if a user is sensed to be drowsy, and the user is working, the heating and/or cooling device can be prompted to provide a cooling effect in an effort to awaken the user.

[0096] The heating and/or cooling effect of the heating and/or cooling devices can be automatically adjusted based on a given variable, such as the time of day, the time of year, or other variable that produces a predictable response. As one example, a user's circadian rhythm can be used as the variable. Data analysis might indicate that an effect (more productivity in a user, for instance, though any effect that can be measured would suffice) is enhanced by heating and/or cooling by varying degrees at different stages in a user's circadian rhythm. A processor can automatically adjust the performance of the heating and/or cooling device to enhance the effect.

[0097] In a climate that has seasons of varying temperature, seasonal adjustment is contemplated. For example, the heating and/or cooling device can be programmed to take into account the likelihood that a user is wearing heavier clothes that cover more of their skin in the Winter than they do in the Summer (and all degrees in between for the Spring and the Autumn). In such as case, the heating and/or cooling device can be programmed to provide a stronger heating

and/or cooling effect in the winter, when the user is expected to have more clothing between the user and the device, and a weaker heating and/or cooling effect in the summer, when the user is expected to have more direct contact with the device.

[0098] Statistical analysis of usage behavior can provide insight into how users tend to use their heating and/or cooling device, and automatic adjustment of a heating and/or cooling device can be programmed based on this statistical analysis. For example, a regression analysis can be performed on a data set of any given size (individual user, a small to large group of users, a facility of users, an enterprise of users, or a global database of all known users) to provide functions that are predictive of a user's expected use of the heating and/or cooling device. The expected use can be used as a recommendation or as an automatic adjustment.

[0099] The heating and/or cooling device can provide an automatic recommendation or be automatically adjusted based on a user's sensed or inputted data. If a user is sensed or indicated to have a certain weight, and statistical analysis has indicated that weight is a variable that has a strong predictive effect on use of the heating and/or cooling device, then a processor can automatically recommend an adjustment that is weight-appropriate. For example, a heavier user might get a recommendation for a cooler setting than a lighter user, assuming everything else being equal. Rather than a recommendation, an automatic adjustment can take a variable such as weight into account. In addition to weight, a user's age, sex, climate where they were raised, or any other variable having predictive value can be used.

[0100] The heating and/or cooling device can provide an automatic recommendation or be automatically adjusted based on a temporary property of a user. For example, if a user has a temporary effect that can impact their expected preferences, then this can be accounted for in the same fashion as the other variables. For example, if a user is identified as a new parent that is likely to be sleep deprived, and if the historical data indicates that new parents tend to prefer a cooler setting than they otherwise would accounting for other variables, then the heating and/or cooling device can automatically recommend or adjust for a cooler setting.

[0101] The heating and/or cooling device can provide an automatic recommendation or be automatically adjusted based on a user's historical data. If a user historically responds to a given observable parameter with a given heating and/or cooling device response, then a processor can either automatically recommend a given setting or can automatically execute a given setting with the historically-observed heating and/or cooling device response. As an example, if a user historically responds to a 74° F. surrounding air temperature by activating a maximum cooling effect, then the cooling effect could automatically initiate in response to sensing the air temperature at 74° F. This assessment of historical behavior can be achieved by a learning algorithm known to those having ordinary skill in the data analytic arts.

[0102] Usage data related to use of the heating and/or cooling devices can be acquired and interpreted in a variety of ways. The data can be used on an individual level, a facility level, an enterprise level, a global level, or within any pre-defined group.

[0103] In one case, the usage data can be analyzed for energy efficiency. Given the localized nature of the use of the

heating and/or cooling device, it might be more energy efficient to keep the environment at a higher temperature and rely more heavily on localized cooling to maintain user comfort. The energy consumption of the heating and/or cooling devices can be analyzed along with the other factors, including energy consumption of the HVAC system, user satisfaction with temperature, and the like.

[0104] The heating and/or cooling devices can be deployed in a medical context. For example, the heating and/or cooling devices can be used in examination tables, examination chairs, and the like. For example, the heating and/or cooling device can be positioned in a location to heat and/or cool a patient's back, buttocks, thighs, etc., in a similar fashion to the furniture context described elsewhere herein. As another example, the heating and/or cooling device can be deployed in a drawer, a shelf, or a similar structure in order to provide heating and/or cooling for instruments or other items stored in a medical examination table or chair. As yet another example, the heating and/or cooling device can be deployed in stirrups of a medical examination table, where a heating function can help patients avoid having to engage with cold stirrups during an examination.

Chair Assembly

[0105] For purposes of description herein, the terms "upper," "lower," "right," "left," "rear," "front," "vertical," "horizontal," and derivatives thereof shall relate to the orientation experienced by a user occupying the invention as oriented in FIG. 7. However, it is to be understood that the invention may assume various alternative orientations and step sequences, except where expressly specified to the contrary. It is also to be understood that the specific devices and processes illustrated in the attached drawings, and described in the following specification are exemplary embodiments of the inventive concepts defined in the appended claims. Hence, specific dimensions and other physical characteristics relating to the embodiments disclosed herein are not to be considered as limiting, unless the claims expressly state otherwise. Various elements of the embodiments disclosed herein may be described as being operably coupled to one another, which includes elements either directly or indirectly coupled to one another. Further, the term "chair" as utilized herein encompasses various seating arrangements of office chairs, vehicle seating, home seating, stadium seating, theater seating, and the like.

[0106] Unless indicated otherwise, the term "user" will be used in this specification to refer to a person that uses resources or other affordances within an enterprise space. For instance, a user may be an employee of a company or other entity (i.e., an enterprise) that uses a task chair and a workstation (e.g., resources) in a company facility.

[0107] Reference numeral 10 (FIGS. 7-12) generally designates a chair assembly as set forth in the present disclosure. In the illustrated example, the chair assembly 10 includes a base assembly 12, a support assembly 14 affixed to the base assembly 12, a seat assembly 16 affixed to the support assembly, a back assembly 18 affixed to the seat assembly 16 or the support assembly 14, and a pair of arm assemblies 20 each affixed to the seat assembly 16, the back assembly 18, or the support assembly 14. FIG. 7 shows the chair assembly 10 in a perspective view from the front-left of the chair assembly 10. FIG. 8 shows the chair assembly from the front of the chair assembly 10. FIG. 9 shows the

chair assembly from the top of the chair assembly 10. FIG. 10 shows the chair assembly from the bottom of the chair assembly. FIG. 11 shows the chair assembly from the left side of the chair assembly 10. FIG. 12 shows the chair assembly from the back of the chair assembly 10.

[0108] The base assembly 12 can take the form shown in FIGS. 7-12 or any other form known to be suitable for stably supporting the rest of the chair assembly 10 while a user occupies the chair assembly 10. The exemplary base assembly 12 includes an integral base member 13 and five casters 15. The base member 13 is a five spoke base member that may be formed of metal, plastic or any other rigid material. A separate caster 15 is mounted to a distal end of each of the five base spokes. Each caster can swivel about a vertical axis as well as rotate about a horizontal axis.

[0109] Examples of other suitable base assemblies 12 include, but are not limited to, at least three radially-oriented arms having rolling members affixed thereto for engaging a surface, a single base member having a footprint that is sufficient for supporting the chair assembly 10 and having a plurality of rolling members affixed thereto for engaging a surface, an assembly with one or more rolling members for engaging a surface and a gyroscopic device for maintaining balance of the chair assembly, and the like.

[0110] The support assembly 14 can take the form shown in FIGS. 7-12 or any other form known to be suitable for stably connecting the base assembly 12 with the remainder of the chair assembly 10. The exemplary support assembly 14 includes a post member 17 and an upper support assembly 19. Post 17 extends upward from a central portion of the base member 13 and upper support assembly 19 is mounted to the top end of the post 17 for rotation about a vertical axis. In at least some embodiments post 17 may be mounted to the base member 13 so that the post can be raised and lowered to accommodate different seat height preferences by a chair user.

[0111] While not shown in detail, support assembly 19 may have many different features and subassemblies that facilitate various adjustments of chair components to accommodate different user preferences. For instance, assembly 19 may include subassemblies that allow seat 16 to be moved forward and rearward relative to post 17 or may allow the front or rear portion of the seat 19 to be raised and lowered to accommodate different preferred seat tilt angles. As another instance, assembly 19 may include a sub-assembly that enables adjustment of the force required to tilt seat 16. In some embodiments, the base assembly 12 and the support assembly 14 may be integrated into a combined base/support assembly.

[0112] The seat assembly 16 can take the form shown in FIGS. 7-12 or any other form known to be suitable for supporting the weight of a user substantially from below the user. The seat assembly 16 can be configured to ergonomically support a user's buttocks, thighs, knees, shins, ankles, or any combinations thereof. The exemplary seat assembly 16 includes, among other features, a top surface 21 having a front edge portion 23, a rear portion 45, and first and second lateral portions 41 and 43, respectively. In at least some embodiments the seat assembly 16 may include a plastic or other type rigid shell member, a foam cushion mounted to or over molded onto the shell member and a fabric, leather or other material cover member. In other embodiments the seat may include a stretched membrane fitted onto a circumferential frame. In still other embodi-

ments the seat assembly 16 may simply included a molded plastic shell that forms a shape that compliments a user's buttocks.

[0113] The back assembly 18 can take the form shown in FIGS. 7-12 or any other form known to be suitable for supporting the weight of a user substantially from any side of the user, such as substantially from the back of the user. The back assembly 18 can be configured to ergonomically support a user's torso, head, arm, pelvis, thighs, or any combination thereof. The back assembly 18 is an optional feature and this disclosure envisions chair assemblies 10 that include no back assemblies 18.

[0114] The exemplary back assembly 18 includes, among other features, a front surface 35 that includes a central portion 27, first and second lateral portions 29 and 31 on opposite sides of the central portion and upper and lower portions 141 and 37 above and below the central portion. In at least some embodiments the back assembly 18 may include a plastic or other type rigid shell member, a foam cushion mounted to or over molded onto the shell member and a fabric, leather or other material cover member. In other embodiments the backrest assembly may include a stretched membrane fitted onto a circumferential frame. In still other embodiments the backrest assembly 18 may simply included a molded plastic shell that forms a shape that compliments a user's buttocks. In at least some embodiments the backrest assembly may also include other assemblies that allow a chair user to adjust various aspects of the backrest assembly to accommodate user preferences. For instance, in at least some cases one or more of the subassemblies may allow a user to adjust the lumbar support of the backrest assembly to raise/lower a lumbar support, to increase or decrease the lumbar support, to change the tilt of the front surface 35 of the backrest, to adjust the force required to recline the backrest, etc. Subassemblies for accomplishing these adjustments are well known in the art and therefore will not be described here in detail.

[0115] The arm assembly 20 can take the form shown in FIGS. 7-12 or any other form known to be suitable for supporting a user's arm substantially from the bottom or side of the user's arm. The arm assembly 20 can be configured to ergonomically support a user's upper arm, elbow, forearm, wrist, hand, or any combination thereof. The arm assembly 20 is an optional feature and this disclosure envisions chair assemblies 10 that include no arm assemblies 20.

[0116] The exemplary arm assembly 20 shown in FIG. 7 includes an arm support structure 51 and a forearm rest member 53 having a top surface 55 that can also be referred to as a comfort surface. Support structure 51 extends upward from upper support assembly 19 and generally angles upward and forward to an upper distal end. Forearm rest member 53 is mounted to the top distal end of support structure 51. Structure 51 includes components that can be adjusted to move the forearm support member 53 to any of several different positions. For instance, support member 53 may be moved upward or downward, forward or backward, inward (e.g., over the seat 16) or outward, may pivot about a vertical axis, etc., within supported ranges.

[0117] Referring now to FIG. 13, in addition to the components described above, at least some embodiments of chair assembly 10 also include a processor 58, a power supply 22, and one or more of a sensing module or sensor 61, 63, 65 and/or one or more application modules or

actuators 73, 75 and 77. Hereinafter, the phrase “feature module” will be used to refer to either of a sensor or an application module.

[0118] Processor 58 includes circuitry for performing various functions required to support whatever features chair 10 includes. For instance, processor 58 may include a memory device that stores software that can be used to perform various functions such as obtaining sensed data from a sensor, processing the obtained data and generating some type of output. For instance, the output may include transmission of the data or some conclusion derived there from to server or the like via an access point within the vicinity of chair 10. As another instance, processor 58 may be programmed to control one or more motors (e.g., an application module) to change the relative juxtapositions of chair 10 components either under control from a chair user or automatically based on some sensed circumstance. It is contemplated that processor 58 may be programmed to perform many other processes, some of which are described hereinafter.

[0119] In addition to including circuitry and a memory for storing programs, processor 58 may include a memory for storing at least some sensed data from one or more sensors included in the chair 10.

[0120] Power supply 22 may be any type of power supply in at least some embodiments. For instance, supply 22 may include a transformer linked to a cord that can be plugged into a powered receptacle to power processor 58, sensors and other modules. As another instance, supply 22 may include a battery that can be periodically replaced. As yet another instance, supply 22 may include a rechargeable battery pack that can be removed and replaced, where the removed battery pack can be recharged as the replacement battery pack is being used. In still other embodiments, supply 22 may include a rechargeable battery that can be recharged periodically. Where supply 22 is rechargeable or needs to be connected to a receptacle, a power connector 60 is provided that is linked to supply 22.

[0121] Referring again to FIG. 7, rechargeable power supply 22 is shown mounted at various positions on chair assembly 10. For example, the rechargeable power supply 22 can be located in or affixed to the base assembly 12, the support assembly 14, the seat assembly 16, the back assembly 18, the arm assembly 20, or any combination thereof. It should be appreciated that the rechargeable power supply 22 can occupy any location within the chair assembly 10, so long as the rechargeable power supply 22 can be sufficiently supported by the chair assembly 10 and can be operably coupled to aspects of the chair assembly 10 that relate to charging and usage of power. Supply 22 can include two or more power supply units, which can be located adjacent to one another or remote from one another. Supply 22 can be configured to transmit a power level signal to the processor, which indicates the power level of the rechargeable power supply.

[0122] Sensors 61, 63, 65, etc., may take any of several different forms and at least some exemplary sensor types are described hereinafter. In general, a sensor may be for sensing any of several different types of parameters including user input parameters (e.g., parameters input by a chair user to adjust the chair or to indicate a user’s condition), biometric or physiological parameters (e.g., temperature, heart rate, blood flow, respiratory rate, etc.), behavioral parameters (e.g., a chair user’s position, rate of movement, etc.),

chair arrangement parameters (e.g., tilt of backrest, height of seat, position of forearm support member, etc.) or chair juxtaposition parameters (e.g., location of chair 10 within an ambient space or relative to some affordance (e.g., a charging station) within the ambient space).

[0123] Application modules 73, 75, 77 include subassemblies or systems that perform some activity such as chair component adjustment, heating or cooling adjustment, control of haptic activities, providing feedback to a chair user, automatic movement of the chair to different locations within an ambient space (e.g., for alignment with a recharging station), automatic adjustment of chair orientation, controlling hardware required for recharging in some cases, etc.

[0124] Processor 58 can be located in or affixed to base assembly 12, support assembly 14, seat assembly 16, backrest assembly 18, or an arm assembly 20. The chair-assembly-based processor can occupy substantially the same locations as the feature modules (e.g., sensors and application modules) described below in at least some embodiments.

[0125] In at least some embodiments at least some of the processes and methods described herein may be performed by one or more processors that reside external to chair 10 or by the chair processor in conjunction with one of the external processors. For example, see user-based processor 52 and facility-based processor 54 in FIG. 13. User-based processor 52 includes a processor that is located on, within, or near (e.g., carried by) a user. For example, a person using chair 10 may also use a portable computing device like a smart phone, a pad type computing device, a laptop computer, a wrist or otherwise wearable computing device such as smart jewelry, smart clothing, smart footwear, smart handwear, smart eyewear, ear technology with an on-board processor, such as a hearing aid or smart contact lenses; or in an implantable device, such as an implantable computing device. Here, processor 52 may receive signals from the chair based processor 58 via a wireless transceiver 67 (e.g., transmitted-receiver) in chair 10 and a mobile device transceiver 87. Thus, in some cases, processor 58 may obtain sensed data from sensors 61, 63, etc., and provide the raw data to processor 52 which would process the information and determine what to do with the results. In some cases the results may cause processor 52 to transmit control signals back to chair 58 to perform some function.

[0126] Referring still to FIG. 13, facility based processor 54 includes one or more processors that are associated with the facility in which chair resides and may include, for instance, a processor that forms part of a facility server, a desktop or other stationary computer within the room in which chair 10 is located, etc. In some cases processor 54 may be remotely located in a different facility (e.g., an enterprise server in a headquarters building in a remote city). Processor 54 may be linked to one or more access points 69 in a facility for wirelessly communicating with transceiver 67.

[0127] In some cases there may be sensors and application modules that are located outside chair 10 and that are linked or at least linkable to one of the user-based processor 52 or the facility-based processor 54. To this end, see again FIG. 13 that shows portable device sensors 89 and application modules 91 linked to processor 52 and sensors 93 and application modules 95 linked to the facility-based processor 54. Here, for instance, a biometric sensor located in a wrist mounted computer may sense one or more physiological parameters of a wearer and may transmit that data to chair

processor **58** to be processed. In the alternative, the wrist based processor **52** may process the physiological parameter and transmit a control signal based thereon to the chair processor **58** to perform some function. As another instance, where a smart phone includes processor **52**, data sensed by chair processor **67** may be used to drive a vibrator or the like (e.g., an application module **91**) in the phone to provide some signal to a chair user (e.g., to signal that the user should change position if the user has been too stagnant in one application).

[0128] Similarly, facility-base processor **54** may receive signals from sensors **93** or from processor **58** and perform various functions to control application modules **95** or to send command signals back to processor **58** to perform some function to control one or more application modules **73**, **75**, **77**, etc. For instance, one of sensors **93** may include a camera (see **100** or **102** in FIG. **14** or **516** in FIG. **21**) that senses when no one is in a space associated with chair **10**. When no one is in the space associated with chair **10**, processor **54** may perform some function to start a battery recharging process. As another instance, when any of the system processors recognizes, based on sensed data, that a person sitting in chair **10** is becoming drowsy, facility-based processor **54** may control lighting in the space that includes chair **10** to increase intensity to help the person wake up. Many other processes associated with application modules are contemplated, many of which are described hereafter.

[0129] The chair-assembly-based processor **58**, the user-based processor **52**, and the facility-based processor **54** can communicate signals to one another to achieve any of the various sensing, application, operations, or functions described herein.

[0130] In at least some embodiments chair assembly **10** may contain one or more features that are inactive until activated by an application run on a device containing a user-based processor. For example, chair assembly **10** may contain a heating function or other function that is inactive until a user activates the heating function or other function from an application run on the portable device that includes processor **52**.

Chair Assembly Power

[0131] In at least some embodiments the amount of power required to operate chair components may be relatively small. For instance, where a chair **10** only includes one or a small number of sensing devices and a transceiver to transmit sensed data to an off-chair processor and no actuators (e.g., application modules), the power required by the chair features may be relatively small. In other cases the amount of power required to support chair features may be relatively large. For instance, where a chair **10** includes a large number of sensors and/or one or more actuators such as motors, vibrators, heaters, cooling mechanisms, etc. the required power may be substantial. The type of power source **22** selected for a chair will be related to the amount of power required by the chair. For instance, where minimal power is required, a relatively small solar cell may be provided on a chair surface that can collect energy from an ambient light source to drive components. To this end, see exemplary solar cell **200** shown on a rear surface of the backrest assembly **18** in FIG. **12**. Cell **200** may provide power directly to feature modules or may be linked to a rechargeable battery type power source **22** to store power which is then fed to

processor **58**, features modules and other devices (e.g., the transceiver **67**) when required.

[0132] Where a more substantial amount of power is required, several power options are available, some of which are more advantageous than others. For instance, see exemplary power cord assembly **202** in FIG. **11**. Assembly **202** includes a spring loaded retractor mechanism **204** and a cord **206**. Cord **206** has a proximal end **208** linked to chair support assembly **14** and a distal end **210** where an intermediate portion between ends **208** and **210** passes through retractor mechanism **204** to be wound thereby. Here, distal end **210** can be pulled from mechanism **204** and plugged into a powered receptacle (not illustrated), for example in a wall or in another device. In this case, power source **22** may include a power transformer and cord **206** may have to be plugged into a receptacle at any time that power is required by chair components. When power is not required, mechanism **204** may be used to aid in winding cord **206** into a housing structure for storage.

[0133] In other embodiments power source **22** may include a battery or some other type of replaceable fuel cell. Here, one advantage is that chair **10** can be used without requiring a cord **206** which often times can get in the way of a chair user. For instance, in many cases a chair user will rotate seat **16** several times during a day during normal use which can cause cord **206** to wrap around the chair base. One problem with batteries or other power sources that need to be periodically replaced is that they place a maintenance burden on a chair user or some other personnel.

[0134] In particularly advantageous embodiments it is contemplated that rechargeable batteries or fuel cells may be provided as power source **22**. Examples of rechargeable batteries include, but are not limited to, a lithium-ion battery, a lithium-ion polymer battery, a nickel-cadmium battery, a nickel-metal hydride battery, a sealed lead acid battery, an alkaline battery, a nickel-hydrogen battery, a nickel-zinc battery, a lithium-air battery, a lithium cobalt oxide battery, a lithium sulfur battery, a lithium-titanate battery, a sodium-ion battery, a potassium-ion battery, a zinc bromide battery, a zinc cerium battery, a vanadium redox battery, a quantum battery, combinations thereof, and the like. The rechargeable battery can be in the form of a thin film battery, a smart battery, a nanowire battery, etc.

[0135] The present disclosure contemplates several different ways to recharge a battery, some requiring at least some manual steps by a chair user and others that are fully automated. The mode of recharging is not intended to be limiting for the present disclosure.

Feature Modules

[0136] Referring to FIGS. **15** through **17**, chair assembly **10** can include one or more feature modules **26** (e.g., sensors or application modules (actuators)). It should be appreciated that the illustrated locations of the feature modules **26** are only examples of the locations they can occupy, and the feature modules **26** can be located in positions others than those shown in the FIGS. **15** through **17**. The one or more feature modules **26** can be located on, within, or affixed to a base assembly **12**, a support assembly **14**, a seat assembly **16**, a back assembly **18**, or an arm assembly **20**. It should also be appreciated that certain feature modules **26** are more appropriately located in certain positions, based on the function of that feature module **26**. For example, a feature module **26** that is intended to interact with the back of a user

is more suitably positioned in the back assembly **18** than elsewhere in the chair assembly **10**. The feature modules **26** can be sensing modules, which can make a measurement relating to a user, the environment, a chair condition, and combinations thereof, application modules, which perform an application relating to the user, the environment, a chair condition, or combinations thereof, or combined sensors/application modules, which perform the functions of both a sensing module and an application module.

[0137] In at least some embodiments, a feature module **26** can be swappable, such that one type of feature module that is located in a particular location on the chair assembly **10** can be removed and replaced with either a replacement of the same type of feature module **26** or a different type of feature module **26**. In this way, the chair assembly **10** is customizable to the user's desired experience and can be modified post-market as a user's desired experiences change.

[0138] Referring to FIG. **18**, a schematic diagram showing the general electronic configuration of a chair assembly **10** is shown including chair processor **28** and exemplary feature modules **26** generally, which can include any of one, a subset of or all of the listed modules.

Sensing Modules

[0139] In an aspect, a sensing module or combined sensing/application module can include one or more user input modules for receiving a command or instruction from a user. The user input module can be a switch, a button, a touchpad, a transceiver that receives signals from other off-chair user input devices such as a wearable computing device, etc. In some cases, the user input module can be located at any location on the chair assembly that can be accessed by a user, preferably a location that can be accessed by a user in a seated position. For example, the user input module can be located on the top, side, front, or bottom of an arm assembly **20**, the front, side, or bottom of a seat assembly **16**, the top, side, bottom, or back of a back assembly **18**, the top, side, or bottom of a base assembly **12**, or the side or bottom of a support assembly **14**.

[0140] The user input module can be configured to transmit a user input signal to the processor **58** representative of the user input. The user input signal can be a simple signal indicating that a user is actuating the user input module or can have some on-board processing capacity in order to send a more complex signal that is more indicative of a user's intention. As an example of the simple signal, a user input module in the form of a button could communicate a binary signal to the processor indicating whether the button is being actuated or not. As an example of the more complex signal, a touch pad could identify a user activity on the touch pad as representing a specific command and can communicate that command to the processor rather than the user activity itself.

[0141] A remote user input module can be remote from the chair assembly **10** and serve the same function as an internal user input module. For example, a device containing a user-based processor, a facility-based processor, or a global processor can serve as a remote user input module. The remote user input module can be configured to transmit a user input signal to the processor **58** representative of the user input.

[0142] A user input module or remote user input module can be an audio sensor, such as a microphone (see, **538** of

FIG. **12** and **540** of FIG. **21**). A user input can be in form of a voice command, a specific sound indicative of a command, a clap of the hands indicative of a command, or any other audio that a user is capable of generating and which the processor has been programmed to interpret.

[0143] In an aspect, a sensing module or combined sensing/application module can include a temperature sensing module configured to measure the temperature at one or more locations on or around the chair assembly **10**. Examples of a temperature sensing module include, but are not limited to, a thermometer, a thermocouple, a thermistor, combinations thereof, and other temperature sensing means known to those having ordinary skill in the temperature sensing arts. The temperature sensing module can be configured to transmit a temperature sensing signal to the processor representative of the sensed temperature. The temperature sensing module can be located at any suitable location for sensing temperature of a chair user or some chair component (e.g., the surface of a material that is in contact with a user).

[0144] In an aspect, a sensing module or combined sensing/application module can include a pressure sensing module for sensing a pressure at one or more locations on the chair assembly **10**. Example of a pressure sensing module include, but are not limited to, a pressure sensor, a barometer, combinations thereof, and other pressure sensing means known to those having ordinary skill in the pressure sensing arts. The pressure sensing module can be configured to transmit a pressure sensing signal to the processor **58** representative of the sensed pressure.

[0145] In an aspect, a sensing module or combined sensing/application module can include a pressure mapping sensing module for mapping the pressure points of a user relative to the chair assembly **10**. The pressure mapping sensing module can include a plurality of pressure sensing modules, pressure sensors, a smart fabric capable of monitoring pressure, combinations thereof, and other pressure mapping means known to those having ordinary skill in the pressure sensing arts. The pressure mapping sensing module can be located in the seat assembly **16**, the back assembly **18**, or an arm assembly **20**. The pressure mapping sensing module is located in the seat assembly **16** in at least some advantageous embodiments.

[0146] A remote pressure mapping sensing module can be located remote from the chair assembly **10** and configured to map the pressure points of a user relative to an external surface, such as a functional surface. The remote pressure mapping sensing module can be configured to transmit a pressure mapping sensing signal to the processor representative of the sensed pressure map.

[0147] In an aspect, a sensing module or combined sensing/application module can include an optical sensing module for measuring optical radiation from the location of the optical sensor. Examples of optical sensing module include, but are not limited to, a camera, such as a charge-collecting device, a colorimeter, a light-emitting diode configured as a sensor, a fiber optic coupled to a sensing means, a photodetector, a photodiode, a photomultiplier tube, a phototransistor, combinations thereof, and other means of optical sensing known to those having ordinary skill in the optical sensing arts. The optical sensing module can be configured to transmit an optical sensing signal to the processor representative of the sensed optical radiation.

[0148] In an aspect, a sensing module or combined sensing/application module can include a LIDAR sensing module adapted to use LIDAR to sense a user, the environment surrounding the chair assembly **10**, or both. The LIDAR sensing module can be configured to transmit a LIDAR sensing signal to the processor representative of the sensed LIDAR.

[0149] In an aspect, a sensing module or combined sensing/application module can include a radar sensing module adapted to use radar to sense a user, the environment surrounding the chair assembly **10**, or both. The radar sensing module can be configured to transmit a radar sensing signal to the processor representative of the sensed radar.

[0150] In an aspect, a sensing module or combined sensing/application module can include a sonar sensing module adapted to use sonar to sense a user, the environment surrounding the chair assembly, or both. The sonar sensing module can be configured to transmit a sonar sensing signal to the processor representative of the sensed sonar.

[0151] In an aspect, a sensing module or combined sensing/application module can include a displacement sensing module adapted to detect the displacement between two or more portions of the chair assembly **10**. Examples of displacement sensing modules include, but are not limited to, a capacitive displacement sensor, an inclinometer, a laser rangefinder, a linear variable differential transformer, a position sensor, a tilt sensor, a variable reluctance sensor, combinations thereof, and other displacement sensing means known to those having ordinary skill in the displacement sensing arts. The displacement sensing module can be configured to transmit a displacement sensing signal to the processor representative of the sensed displacement.

[0152] In an aspect, a sensing module or combined sensing/application module can include an occupancy sensing module for sensing the presence or absence of a user in the chair assembly **10**; in the vicinity of the chair assembly **10**; or in a pre-defined space co-occupied by the chair assembly **10**, such as in the same room as the chair assembly **10**, on the same floor as the chair assembly **10**, or in the same facility as the chair assembly **10**.

[0153] The occupancy sensing module can include a pressure sensing module adapted to sense the presence or absence of a user in the chair assembly **10** or adapted to sense a change in pressure at one or more locations on the chair assembly **10**, the change in pressure indicative of the presence or absence of a user, an optical sensing module, such as a camera, adapted to visually determine the presence or absence of a user, a LIDAR sensing module adapted to use LIDAR to determine the presence or absence of a user, a radar sensing module adapted to use radar to determine the presence or absence of a user, a sonar sensing module adapted to use sonar to determine the presence or absence of a user, a displacement sensing module adapted to use the displacement of a portion of the chair assembly to determine the presence or absence of a user in the chair assembly **10**, combinations thereof, and other means of occupancy sensing known to those having ordinary skill in the occupancy sensing arts.

[0154] The occupancy sensing module can be configured to transmit an occupancy sensing signal to the processor representative of the presence or absence of a user within the chair assembly **10**. In other aspects, the occupancy sensing

signal can be representative of the presence or absence of a user in a pre-defined space co-occupied by the chair assembly **10**.

[0155] In some aspects, a user-based processor can generate an occupancy sensing signal without the use of the occupancy sensing module by utilizing a location feature of the device in which its contained to determine the presence or absence of a user in the chair assembly **10**; in the vicinity of the chair assembly **10**; or in a pre-defined space co-occupied by the chair assembly **10**.

[0156] In an aspect, a sensing module or combined sensing/application module can include a foot sensing module for sensing the placement, pressure, or placement and pressure of a user's feet when the user is seated in the chair assembly **10**. The foot sensing module can be configured to transmit a foot sensing signal to the processor representative of the sensed placement, pressure, or placement and pressure of the user's feet.

[0157] In an aspect, a sensing module or combined sensing/application module can include an orientation sensing module for sensing the state of the chair assembly **10** including, but not limited to, an angle of a part of the chair assembly **10**, a height of a part of the chair assembly **10**, a rotational angle of a chair assembly **10**, combinations thereof, and other means of sensing the orientation of the chair assembly **10** known to those having ordinary skill in the orientation sensing arts. Examples of an orientation sensing module include, but are not limited to, the optical sensing module, the displacement sensing module, combinations thereof, and the like. The orientation sensing module can be configured to transmit an orientation sensing signal to the processor representative of the sensed orientation of the chair assembly **10**.

[0158] In an aspect, a sensing module or combined sensing/application module can include a proximity sensing module for sensing the proximity of the chair assembly **10** to nearby affordances, irrespective of the chair assembly **10** position or orientation. In some aspects, the proximity sensing module can indicate that a table is some distance to the left of the chair assembly **10**, without determining how the table and chair assembly **10** are positioned or oriented with respect to the location that they occupy. In some aspects, the proximity sensing module can be determined by a signal that also contains position or orientation data. The proximity sensing module can be configured to transmit a proximity sensing signal to the processor representative of a proximity of the chair assembly **10** to other affordances.

[0159] The orientation or proximity sensing signal can be generated by one or more remote sensors **512** that are remote from the chair assembly **10**. For example, a camera **516** that is remote from the chair assembly **10** can acquire an image that is processed to determine the orientation of the chair assembly **10** or the proximity of the chair assembly **10** to a nearby affordance and subsequently generate an orientation or proximity sensing signal representative of the sensed orientation of the chair assembly **10** or proximity of the chair assembly **10** to other affordances.

[0160] In an aspect, a sensing module or combined sensing/application module can include a weight sensing module for sensing the weight of a user in the chair assembly **10**. The weight sensing module can sense the weight of a user directly, such as by using a weight sensor pad integrated into the chair assembly **10**, or indirectly, such as inferring a weight of a user by measuring the amount of displacement

of the chair assembly **10** or a displacement or increase in pressure of a pneumatic cylinder that supports the user's body weight. The weight sensing module can be configured to transmit a weight sensing signal to the processor representative of the sensed weight of the user.

[0161] In an aspect, a sensing module or combined sensing/application module can include a blood oxygenation sensing module for sensing the oxygenation of the blood of a user. The blood oxygenation sensing module can include one or more transmission pulse oximetry sensors, reflectance pulse oximetry sensors, combinations thereof, and other means of blood oxygenation sensing known to those having ordinary skill in the blood oxygenation sensing arts. The blood oxygenation sensing module can be placed in contact with a user or remote from a user. The blood oxygenation sensing module can be configured to transmit a blood oxygenation sensing signal to the processor representative of the sensed blood oxygenation.

[0162] In an aspect, a sensing module or combined sensing/application module can include an electric property sensing module, such as an electromyography sensing module, an electrocardiography sensing module, an electroencephalography sensing module, or any combination thereof for sensing electric properties from a user. Examples of an electric property sensing module include, but are not limited to, a capacitive sensor, a current sensor, a galvanometer, a hall effect sensor, a magnetometer, a magnetic field sensor, a Hall sensor, a voltage sensor, combinations thereof, and other electric property sensing means known to those having ordinary skill in the electric property sensing arts. The electric property sensing module can be configured to transmit an electric sensing signal to the processor representative of the sensed electric property. The electromyography, electrocardiography, and electroencephalography sensing modules can be configured to transmit electromyography, electrocardiography, and electroencephalography sensing signals, respectively, to the processor representative of the respective sensed electromyography, electrocardiography, and electroencephalography.

[0163] In an aspect, a sensing module or combined sensing/application module can include a location sensing module for sensing the location of a chair assembly **10** within a particular space. Examples of a location sensing module include, but are not limited to, an optical sensing module, such as a camera, adapted to visually determine the location of the chair assembly **10**, a LIDAR sensing module adapted to use LIDAR to determine the location of the chair assembly **10**, a radar sensing module adapted to use radar to determine the location of the chair assembly **10**, a sonar sensing module adapted to use sonar to determine the location of the chair assembly **10**, combinations thereof, and other means of sensing location known to those having ordinary skill in the location sensing arts. The location sensing module may be configured to transmit a location sensing signal to the processor representative of the location of the chair assembly **10**. The location sensing signal can be generated by one or more sensors that are remote from the chair assembly **10**.

[0164] In an aspect, a sensing module or combined sensing/application module can include an aspiration sensing module for sensing the breathing of a user. The aspiration sensing module can determine the breathing rate, the breathing depth, or a combination thereof of a user by directly contacting the user or indirectly by remotely sensing the

breathing rate of a user in a location where the breathing rate can be measured, for example, on the back of the user near the diaphragm, on the chest cavity of the user, or combinations thereof. Example of aspiration sensing modules that monitor the heart rate by directly contacting the user include, but are not limited to, one or more electric sensing modules located in a position suitable for coupling to a user's skin, a smart fabric, or combinations thereof, and other aspiration sensing means known to those having ordinary skill in the aspiration sensing arts. Examples of aspiration sensing modules that remotely monitor the heart rate include, but are not limited to, an optical sensing module that can be selectively aimed at one of the locations where the heart rate can be measured, or combinations thereof, and the like. The aspiration sensing module can be configured to transmit an aspiration sensing signal to the processor representative of the sensed aspiration rate or depth.

[0165] In an aspect, a sensing module or combined sensing/application module can include a heart rate sensing module for sensing the heart rate of a user. The heart rate sensing module can determine the heart rate of a user by directly contacting the user or indirectly by remotely sensing the heart rate of a user in a location where the heart rate can be measured, for example, on the wrist of the user, behind the knee of the user, or combinations thereof. Example of heart rate sensing modules that monitor the heart rate by directly contacting the user include, but are not limited to, an electric property sensing module, one or more electrodes located in a position suitable for coupling to a user's skin, a smart fabric, or combinations thereof, and other means of directly sensing heart rate known to those having ordinary skill in the heart rate sensing arts. Examples of heart rate sensing modules that remotely monitor the heart rate include, but are not limited to, an optical sensing module, an optical sensor that can be selectively aimed at one of the locations where the heart rate can be measured, or combinations thereof, and other means of remotely sensing the heart rate of user known to those having ordinary skill in the heart rate monitoring arts. The heart rate sensing module can be configured to transmit a heart rate sensing signal to the processor representative of the sensed heart rate.

[0166] In an aspect, a sensing module or combined sensing/application module can include an internal motion sensing module for sensing movement of the chair assembly **10**. Examples of an internal motion sensing module include, but are not limited to, a gyroscope, a motion detector, the LIDAR sensing module, the radar sensing module, the sonar sensing module, combinations thereof, and other means of sensing internal motion known to those having ordinary skill in the motion sensing arts. The internal motion sensing module can be configured to transmit an internal motion sensing signal to the processor representative of the sensed internal motion.

[0167] In an aspect, a sensing module or combined sensing/application module can include an external motion sensing module for sensing movement of a user or other object in the vicinity of the chair assembly **10**. Examples of an external motion sensing module include, but are not limited to, a motion detector, the LIDAR sensing module, the radar sensing module, the sonar sensing module, combinations thereof, and other means of sensing external motion known to those having ordinary skill in the motion sensing arts. The external motion sensing module can be configured to trans-

mit an external motion sensing signal to the processor representative of the sensed external motion.

[0168] In an aspect, a sensing module or combined sensing/application module can include an audio sensing module for sensing audio in the vicinity of the chair assembly **10**. An example of an audio sensing module includes, but is not limited to, a microphone **538** (see, FIG. **12**). The audio sensing module can be configured to transmit an audio sensing signal to the processor representative of the sensed audio.

[0169] In an aspect, a sensing module or combined sensing/application module can include an olfactory sensing module for sensing the smell of a user or an area surrounding the chair assembly **10**. Examples of an olfactory sensing module include, but are not limited to, an olfactometer, an electronic nose, combinations thereof, and other means of sensing olfactory signals known to those having ordinary skill in the olfactory sensing arts. The olfactory sensing module can be configured to transmit an olfactory sensing signal representative of the sensed smell.

[0170] In an aspect, a sensing module or combined sensing/application module can include a tactile sensing module for sensing the touch of a user. Examples of a tactile sensing module include, but are not limited to, a smart fabric, a tactile sensor, combinations thereof, and other means of tactile sensing known to those having ordinary skill in the tactile sensing arts. The tactile sensing module can be configured to transmit a tactile sensing signal representative of the sensed touch.

[0171] In an aspect, a sensing module or combined sensing/application module can include a maintenance sensing module for sensing an impending or current failure of a part of the chair assembly **10**. The maintenance sensing module can be configured to transmit a maintenance sensing signal representative of the need for maintenance.

[0172] In an aspect, a sensing module or combined sensing/application module can include an altitude sensing module for sensing the altitude of the chair assembly **10**. An example of an altitude sensing module includes, but is not limited to, an altimeter. The altitude sensing module can be configured to transmit an altitude sensing signal representative of the sensed altitude.

[0173] In an aspect, a sensing module or combined sensing/application module can include an air flow sensing module for sensing the air flow in and around the chair assembly **10**. An example of an air flow sensing module includes, but is not limited to, an air flow meter. The air flow sensing module can be configured to transmit an air flow sensing signal to the processor representative of the sensed air flow.

[0174] In an aspect, a sensing module or combined sensing/application module can include a seismic sensing module for sensing seismic activity of the surface on which the chair assembly sits **10**. Examples of a seismic sensing module include, but are not limited to, a geophone, a seismometer, combinations thereof, and other means of sensing seismic motion known to those having ordinary skill in the seismic sensing arts. The seismic sensing module can be configured to transmit a seismic sensing signal to the processor representative of the seismic activity of the surface.

[0175] In an aspect, a sensing module or combined sensing/application module can include a chemical sensing module for sensing the presence or abundance of a chemical

species in the vicinity of the chair assembly **10**. Examples of a chemical sensing module can include, but are not limited to, a breathalyzer, a carbon dioxide sensor, a carbon monoxide sensor, a chemical field-effect transistor, an electrochemical gas sensor, a hydrogen sensor, a hydrogen sulfide sensor, a nitrogen oxide sensor, an oxygen sensor, a ozone sensor, a potentiometric sensor, combinations thereof, and other chemical sensing means known to those having ordinary skill in the chemical sensing art. The chemical sensing module can be configured to transmit a chemical sensing signal to the processor representative of the sensed presence or abundance chemical species.

[0176] In an aspect, a sensing module or combined sensing/application module can include a moisture sensing module for sensing the presence or abundance of moisture at a location on the chair assembly **10** or in the vicinity of the chair assembly **10**. Examples of a moisture sensing module include, but are not limited to, an electric property sensing module, a temperature sensing module, a hygrometer, combinations thereof, and other means of sensing moisture known to those having ordinary skill in the moisture sensing arts. The moisture sensing module can be configured to transmit a moisture sensing signal to the processor representative of the sensed moisture.

[0177] In an aspect, a sensing module or combined sensing/application module can include a posture or distribution of weight sensor. This sensor can be a standalone sensor or can be a combination of other sensors from which the posture or distribution of weight is derived or inferred.

[0178] In an aspect, a sensing module or combined sensing/application module can include a stress measuring module. This sensor can be a combination of other sensors from which the stress levels of a user are derived.

[0179] In an aspect, a sensing module or combined sensing/application module can include a time sensor for determining the length of time that has passed between sensing or actuator events or for determining the time of day.

[0180] In an aspect, a sensing module or combined sensing/application module can include a user identity or recognition sensor for determining the identify of a user that is in proximity to the chair assembly **10** or seated in the chair assembly **10**.

[0181] In an aspect, a sensing module or combined sensing/application module can include a body dimensions sensor for measuring the dimensions of a user's body. For example, the length of a user's femur, the distance between a user's shoulder blades, the circumference of a user's wrist, and other body dimension measurements can be made.

[0182] In an aspect, a sensing module or combined sensing/application module can include an alertness or attentiveness sensor for measuring the alertness or attentiveness of a user. This sensor can be a combination of other sensors from which the alertness or attentiveness of a user are derived. For example, an eye-movement sensor can be used to derive the alertness or attentiveness of a user.

[0183] In an aspect, a sensing module or combined sensing/application module can include an emotional state sensor. This sensor can be a combination of other sensors from which the emotional state of a user are derived. For example, an galvanic skin response sensor can be used to derive the emotional state of a user.

[0184] In an aspect, a sensing module or combined sensing/application module can include a flow sensor. This sensor can be a combination of other sensors from which the

flow of a user are derived. For example, a sensor monitoring brain activity can be used to derive the flow of a user.

[0185] In an aspect, a sensing module or combined sensing/application module can include an ambient environmental sensor for sensing one or more properties of the ambient environment, including but not limited to, temperature, sound, air flow, light, and the like.

[0186] In an aspect, a sensing module or combined sensing/application module can include a microbial sensor for sensing the presence of microbes on or within the chair assembly or on a user.

[0187] In an aspect, a sensing module or combined sensing/application module can include a fatigue sensor for measuring the fatigue of a user. This sensor can be a combination of other sensors from which the flow of a user are derived.

[0188] In an aspect, a sensing module or combined sensing/application module can include a break necessity sensor for sensing a user's state of needing a break from a given task. This sensor can be a combination of other sensors from which the flow of a user are derived.

[0189] In some aspects, sensing modules or combined sensing/application modules can be adapted to only provide a signal when a change of a pre-determined degree has been sensed. This change can be a change within a single sensing module or combined sensing/application module or a collective change between multiple sensing module or combined sensing/application modules. These features can provide power usage efficiency to the sensing modules or combined sensing/application modules.

[0190] Application Modules

[0191] In an aspect, an application module or combined sensing/application module can include a motion application module, which can move part of the chair assembly **10** or the entire chair assembly **10** in response to a motion application signal. Examples of a motion application module include, but are not limited to, a motor coupled to one or more parts of the chair assembly **10**; a smart material and means of providing an external stimulus to actuate the smart material, such as an electroactive material and a means of providing current to the electroactive material, a piezoelectric material and means of providing a voltage, a shape-memory material and a means of adjusting the temperature of the shape-memory material, a magnetostrictive material and means of applying a magnetic field, a pH-sensitive material and a means of adjusting the pH surrounding the pH-sensitive material, a photomechanical material, and a means of providing photons to the photomechanical material, and combinations thereof; a spring-loaded actuator; a pneumatic or hydraulic device; a solenoid; combinations thereof, and other means of applying motion known to those having ordinary skill in the mechanical arts. In one aspect, the motion application module can be a motor coupled to a caster that is affixed to the base assembly **12**. The motor can be disconnected while a user is occupying the chair assembly **10** so as to reduce the force necessary to move the chair assembly **10** and to reduce wear on the motor.

[0192] In an aspect, to move the entire chair assembly **10**, the motion application module can be a motor operatively coupled to a means of impulsion, such as a wheel; a magnetic means of impulsion, such as an electromagnet that is selectively magnetized and moves the chair assembly **10** along a path by virtue of the magnetization; combinations

thereof, and other means of impulsion known to those having ordinary skill in the mechanical arts.

[0193] Referring to FIG. **11**, the chair assembly **10** can include motion application modules, such as motors **39**, at various locations that are suitable for moving the various portions of the chair assembly **10**.

[0194] In an aspect, an application module or combined sensing/application module can include a heating application module for applying heat to a user in response to a heating application signal. Examples of heating application modules can include, but are not limited to, a heating pad, a carbon fiber heating cover, combinations thereof, and other means of applying heat known to those having ordinary skill in the heat application arts. Heating application modules can be located within the back assembly **18** at a location that contacts a user's lower back or lumbar region, including a central portion of the lower back, a peripheral portion of the lower back, or both, a user's mid back, including a central portion of the mid back, a peripheral portion of the mid back, or both, or a user's upper back, including a central portion of the upper back, a peripheral portion of the upper back, or both. Heating application modules can be located within the back assembly **18** at locations that target specific muscles, such as the intratransversarii muscles, the multifidus muscles, the trapezius muscles, the large latissimus dorsi, or any combination thereof.

[0195] In an aspect, an application module or combined sensing/application module can include a cooling application module for applying cooling to a user in response to a cooling application signal. Examples of cooling application modules can include, but are not limited to, a fan, a cooling pad, combinations thereof, and other means of applying cooling known to those having ordinary skill in the cooling application arts.

[0196] The heating application module and the cooling application module can be separate or can be contained within a single heating/cooling application module in response to a heating/cooling application signal.

[0197] In an aspect, an application module or combined sensing/application module can include a pressure application module for applying pressure to a user in response to a pressure application signal. Examples of the pressure application module include, but are not limited to, a motion application module configured to apply pressure to a particular area on a user, combinations thereof, and other pressure application means known to those having ordinary skill in the pressure application arts.

[0198] In an aspect, an application module or combined sensing/application module can include a haptic application module for stimulating the sense of touch of a user in response to a haptic application signal. Examples of a haptic application module include, but are not limited to, a vibratory motor, an electroactive material, a piezoelectric material, an acoustic radiation source, combinations thereof, and other means of haptic application known to those having ordinary skill in the haptic arts. In certain aspects, the haptic application module can be a motor **23** located within or affixed to a caster **15** that is disengaged from the caster **15** and engaged with an unbalanced weight to provide vibration to the chair assembly **10**.

[0199] In an aspect, an application module or combined sensing/application module can include an audio application module for transmitting sound to a user or the vicinity of the chair assembly **10**. The audio application module can

receive an audio application signal from the processor that carries instructions that direct the audio application module to provide a particular audio response.

[0200] Examples of audio application modules can include, but are not limited to, a sound transducer, such as a speaker, an air-induced sound generating device, such as a whistle, a percussive sound generating device, such as an alarm bell, combinations thereof, and other audio sources known to those having ordinary skill in the audio arts.

[0201] In an aspect, an application module or combined sensing/application module can include a visual indicator module for providing a visual indication. The visual indicator module can receive a visual indicator signal from the processor that carries instructions that direct the visual indicator module to provide a particular visual indicator. Alternatively, the visual indicator module can receive a signal directly from a separate feature module and can provide a visual indication in response to the signal.

[0202] Examples of visual indicator modules can include, but are not limited to, a light-emitting diode, a display screen, a projector, a laser or other light source, one or more optical fibers coupled to a laser or other light source, combinations thereof, and other visual indicators known to those having ordinary skill in the optical arts.

[0203] In certain aspects, a remote visual indicator can serve the same function as the visual indicator module, but is not included in the chair assembly 10 itself. The remote visual indicator can be the same kind of visual indicator as set forth above for the visual indicator module. The remote visual indicator can be located on a docking station, within a workspace, on a device including a user-based processor, a facility-based processor, or a global processor, or any combination thereof.

[0204] In an aspect, an application module or combined sensing/application module can include a massage application module for applying massage to a user in response to a massage application signal. Examples of massage application modules include, but are not limited to, a haptic application module, a shiatsu massager, combinations thereof, and other means of applying massage known to those having ordinary skill in the massage application arts.

[0205] In an aspect, an application module or combined sensing/application module can include an olfactory application module for generating a particular olfactory experience for a user or in the vicinity of the chair assembly 10 in response to an olfactory application signal. Examples of olfactory application modules include, but are not limited to, a nozzle coupled to a source of aroma, a pheromone emitter, combinations thereof, and other means of generating an olfactory experience known to those having ordinary skill in the olfactory arts.

[0206] Referring to FIG. 18, a block diagram showing the general electronic configuration of a chair assembly 10 is shown that includes the processor 58, transceiver 67 and power supply 22 described above along with one or more features modules 26 such as sensors and/or application modules. The sensors in a chair assembly may include user input modules 1, 2, . . . , N, temperature sensing modules 1, 2, . . . , N, optical sensing modules 1, 2, . . . , N, electric property sensing modules 1, 2, . . . , N, pressure sensing modules 1, 2, . . . , N, motion sensing modules 1, 2, . . . , N, audio sensing modules 1, 2, . . . , N, olfactory sensing modules 1, 2, . . . , N, tactile sensing modules 1, 2, . . . , N, blood oxygenation sensing modules 1, 2, . . . , N, aspiration

sensing modules 1, 2, . . . , N, heart rate sensing modules 1, 2, . . . , N, displacement sensing modules 1, 2, . . . , N, or other sensing modules 1, 2, . . . , N described herein connected in the same fashion.

[0207] The application modules in a chair assembly 10 may include motion application modules 1, 2, . . . , N, heating application modules 1, 2, . . . , N, cooling application modules 1, 2, . . . , N, heating/cooling application modules 1, 2, . . . , N, pressure application modules 1, 2, . . . , N, haptic application modules 1, 2, . . . , N, audio application modules 1, 2, . . . , N, visual indicator modules 1, 2, . . . , N, massage application modules 1, 2, . . . , N, olfactory application modules 1, 2, . . . , N, or other application modules 1, 2, . . . , N described herein connected in the same fashion.

[0208] As described above, in many cases a user's portable computing device and/or a facility in which a chair assembly resides may include one or more additional sensors and application modules for performing various functions that are consistent with at least some aspects of the present disclosure. In this regard, see, for instance, FIG. 19 where a set of facility sensors and application modules are presented at 430 that may be linked to the facility processor 54. Similarly, see FIG. 20 where a set of user based device sensors and application modules are presented at 440 that may be linked to the user based processor 52.

[0209] Referring to FIGS. 18 through 20, the processors 58, 54 and 52 may communicate data, commands and other information back and forth to facilitate any of the processes contemplated herein. In addition, any subset of the sensors and application modules described above may be used to perform various processes. Thus, for instance, a combination of 3 sensors from modules 26, 2 sensors from modules 440 and one sensor from modules 430 may be combined to generate three command signals that are used to drive three separate application modules, one in each of the module sets 26, 420 and 430. Many processes that use many different sensor combinations and control many different sets of application modules are contemplated in this disclosure.

Modes of Operation

[0210] In an aspect, the processor can be configured to operate in an occupancy sensing mode to sense the presence or absence of a user in the chair assembly 10; in the vicinity of the chair assembly 10; or in a pre-defined space co-occupied by the chair assembly 10, such as in the same room as the chair assembly 10, on the same floor as the chair assembly 10, or in the same facility as the chair assembly 10.

[0211] The occupancy sensing mode can be triggered by an occupancy sensing signal, a user input signal, a temperature sensing signal, a pressure sensing signal, a pressure mapping sensing signal, a pressure mapping sensing signal, an optical sensing signal, a LIDAR sensing signal, a radar sensing signal, a sonar sensing signal, a displacement sensing signal, a foot sensing signal, a weight sensing signal, a blood oxygenation sensing signal, an electric property signal, an electromyography sensing signal, an electrocardiography sensing signal, an electroencephalography sensing signal, an aspiration sensing signal, a heart rate sensing signal, an internal motion sensing signal, an external motion sensing signal, an audio sensing signal, an olfactory sensing signal, a tactile sensing signal, or any combination thereof.

[0212] In some aspects, processor 58 can receive an occupancy signal from outside the chair assembly 10 that indicates that a user has just begun occupying the chair assembly

10, that the user may occupy the chair assembly **10** in the near future, or that the user is intending to occupy the chair assembly **10** in the near future. For example, an access key to a certain area of the facility can trigger the access key reader or electronics associated with the access key reader to provide an occupancy signal to the processor; identifying a user on a camera that provides images of a certain area of the facility using facial recognition or other recognition software, such as an employee badge or other wearable piece that emits or reflects light in a way that can be acquired by a camera, can trigger the delivery of an occupancy signal to the processor; and combinations thereof.

[0213] When operating in the occupancy sensing mode, the processor can be configured to generate a processor occupancy sensing signal for use in the processor or to transmit a processor occupancy sensing signal. The processor occupancy sensing signal can correspond to the presence or absence of a user in the chair assembly **10**; in the vicinity of the chair assembly **10**; or in a pre-defined space co-occupied by the chair assembly **10**, such as in the same room as the chair assembly **10**, on the same floor as the chair assembly **10**, or in the same facility as the chair assembly **10**. The processor occupancy sensing signal can be the same as or different than the occupancy sensing signal.

[0214] Upon sensing the presence of a user in the chair assembly **10**; in the vicinity of the chair assembly **10**; or in a pre-defined space co-occupied by the chair assembly **10**, such as in the same room as the chair assembly **10**, on the same floor as the chair assembly **10**, or in the same facility as the chair assembly **10**, the processor can be configured to provide a motion application signal to a motion application module, a heating application signal to a heating application module, a cooling application signal to a cooling application module, a cooling/heating application signal to a cooling/heating application module, a pressure application signal to a pressure application module, a haptic application signal to a haptic application module, an audio application signal to an audio application module, a visual indicator signal to a visual indicator module, a massage application signal to a massage application module, an olfactory application signal to an olfactory application module, or any combination thereof.

[0215] If a chair-assembly-based or user-based processor is operating in an occupancy sensing mode, the chair-assembly-based or user-based processor can record on associated memory a single-user occupancy record including the time that the user occupies the chair assembly **10**. For example, the chair-assembly-based or user-based processor can record data to associated memory indicating that a user occupied the chair assembly **10** during a specific time frame and was near the chair assembly **10** during a different specific time frame.

[0216] If a facility-based or global processor is operating in an occupancy sensing mode, the facility-based or global processor can provide real-time monitoring of the use of chairs for a group of users, can record user-specific data to a single-user occupancy sensing record or a multi-user occupancy sensing record indicating the time that the user or users occupy the chair assembly **10**, or a combination thereof. For example, the facility-based or global processor can display a real-time picture or real-time statistics of chair usage for a facility or group of users. As another example, the facility-based or global processor can record data to

associated memory indicating the chair assembly **10** usage habits of a user or group of users.

[0217] In an aspect, the processor can be configured to operate in a user-identification mode, where the processor identifies the particular user that is occupying a chair assembly **10** or a particular user than might imminently occupy the chair assembly **10**. When operating in the user-identification mode, the processor can be configured to generate a user-identification signal for use in the processor, to transmit a user-identification signal, or both. The user-identification signal can correspond to the identity of a specific user. The user-identification signal can be utilized in one or more of the operation modes described herein.

[0218] In an aspect, the processor can be configured to operate in a user-specific configuration mode, where the processor configures the chair assembly **10** to a particular user's desired configuration. The user-specific configuration mode can be triggered by the user-identification signal or another signal identifying a specific user. The particular user's desired configuration can be stored on memory accessible by the processor. On receiving a user-identification signal, the processor can provide a user-specific motion application signal to a motion application module, a user-specific heating application signal to a heating application module, a user-specific cooling application signal to a cooling application module, a user-specific cooling/heating application signal to a cooling/heating application module, a user-specific pressure application signal to a pressure application module, a user-specific haptic application signal to a haptic application module, a user-specific audio application signal to an audio application module, a user-specific visual indicator signal to a visual indicator module, a user-specific massage application signal to a massage application module, a user-specific olfactory application signal to an olfactory application module, or any combination thereof.

[0219] For example, the user-specific configuration mode can direct the chair assembly **10** to: move to a certain chair configuration that is tailored to the user; apply heating or cooling at certain locations that are tailored to the user; apply pressure at certain locations that are tailored to the user; apply certain haptic effects at certain locations that are tailored to the user; provide an audio environment that is tailored to the user; provide a visual environment that is tailored to the user; provide a massage application at certain locations that is tailored to the user; provide an olfactory experience that is tailored to the user; or a combination thereof.

[0220] A user-based processor can be configured to override other processors by transmitting an override user configuration signal that identifies the particular user to which the user-based processor is associated. For example, when a user enters a facility, a room containing the chair assembly, or sits in the chair assembly, the user-based processor can instruct a particular chair assembly **10** to be configured for the particular user's desired configuration, which can be stored on memory accessible by the processor.

[0221] In an aspect, the processor can be configured to operate in a posture determination mode to determine the posture of a user occupying the chair assembly **10**. In the posture determination mode, the processor receives one or more signals from one or more sensing modules or combined sensing/application modules and determines the posture of the user. The processor can use a user input signal, a pressure sensing signal, a pressure mapping sensing signal,

an optical sensing signal, a LIDAR sensing signal, a radar sensing signal, a sonar sensing signal, a displacement sensing signal, an occupancy sensing signal, a processor occupancy sensing signal, a foot sensing signal, an orientation sensing signal, an internal motion sensing signal, an external motion sensing signal, a tactile sensing signal, or a combination thereof. When operating in the posture determination mode, the processor can be configured to generate a posture sensing signal for use in the processor or to transmit a posture sensing signal. The posture sensing signal can correspond to a determined posture of the user.

[0222] Upon sensing the posture of the user, the processor can be configured to respond by providing a motion application signal to a motion application module, a heating application signal to a heating application module, a cooling application signal to a cooling application module, a cooling/heating application signal to a cooling/heating application module, a pressure application signal to a pressure application module, a haptic application signal to a haptic application module, an audio application signal to an audio application module, a visual indicator signal to a visual indicator module, a massage application signal to a massage application module, an olfactory application signal to an olfactory application module, or any combination thereof.

[0223] In response to a posture sensing signal, the processor can be configured to operate in a posture adjustment mode to adjust the posture of the user by providing a posture-adjusting motion application signal to a motion application module, a posture-adjusting heating application signal to a heating application module, a posture-adjusting cooling application signal to a cooling application module, a posture-adjusting cooling/heating application signal to a cooling/heating application module, a posture-adjusting pressure application signal to a pressure application module, a posture-adjusting haptic application signal to a haptic application module, a posture-adjusting audio application signal to an audio application module, a posture-adjusting visual indicator signal to a visual indicator module, a posture-adjusting massage application signal to a massage application module, a posture-adjusting olfactory application signal to an olfactory application module, or any combination thereof.

[0224] For example, if the posture sensing mode determines that a user is sitting with bad posture, the chair assembly **10** can induce the user to adopt a better posture position by doing one or more of the following: the motion application module or modules can provide motion to the chair assembly **10** in a way that induces improved posture; the heating, cooling, or heating/cooling application module can apply heating or cooling to particular places on the user that induce improved posture, for example, to the lower back of a user or to the upper back of a user; the pressure application module can apply pressure to particular places on the user that induce improved posture; the audio application module can provide an audio cue, the visual indicator signal can provide a visual cue, the haptic application module can provide a haptic cue, the olfactory application signal can provide an olfactory cue, or a combination thereof to instruct the user that the user is sitting with bad posture and to suggest that the user adopt a better posture; the massage application module can apply massage to the user in ways that induce improved posture. The conditions that improve a user's posture can be pre-programmed, can be based on an average effect for a group of users, can be based

on a scientific study of improved posture, can be learned by the processor over time, or any combination thereof.

[0225] In an aspect related to the posture adjustment mode, the processor can be configured to operate in a blood flow improvement mode where the aforementioned posture adjustment mode is specialized for the purpose of improving blood flow in the user.

[0226] In an aspect, the processor can be configured to operate in an automatic motion mode to provide motion to the chair assembly **10** without necessitating a user input. Generally, in the automatic motion mode, the processor can be programmed to provide a motion signal to one or more motion application modules in response to a pre-determined automatic motion condition. The pre-determined automatic motion condition can include an occupancy sensing signal or processor occupancy sensing signal indicating the presence or absence of a user, an optical sensing signal indicating the presence or absence of a user, an audio sensing signal indicating the presence or absence of a user, the triggering of the user specific configuration mode, the triggering of the posture adjustment mode, or a combination thereof.

[0227] The automatic motion mode can include moving the chair assembly **10** to a different position within a workspace. The automatic motion mode can move the chair assembly **10** without a user seated in the chair assembly **10**. The automatic motion mode can move the chair assembly **10** with a user seated in the chair assembly **10**.

[0228] In an aspect, the processor can be configured to operate in a manual motion mode to provide motion to the chair assembly **10** based at least partially on a user input. Generally, in the manual motion mode, the processor can be programmed to provide a motion signal to a motion application module in response to a signal from the user input module indicating that a user has instructed the chair assembly **10** to move in a particular fashion.

[0229] The manual motion mode can include manually adjusting parameters of the chair assembly **10** to be tailored for a specific user. The manual motion mode can include moving the chair assembly **10** to a different position within a workspace at least partially in response to a user command provided to the user input module or remote user input module and communicated to the processor.

[0230] In an aspect, the processor can be configured to operate in a heating application mode to apply heating to one or more specific locations on a user. In heating application mode, the processor can transmit a heating application signal to one or more heating application modules.

[0231] In an aspect, the processor can be configured to operate in a cooling application mode to apply cooling to one or more specific locations on a user. In cooling application mode, the processor can transmit a cooling application signal to one or more cooling application modules.

[0232] In an aspect, the processor can be configured to operate in a pressure application mode to apply pressure to one or more specific locations on a user. In pressure application mode, the processor can transmit a pressure application signal to one or more pressure application modules.

[0233] In an aspect, the processor can be configured to operate in a combined heating/pressure application mode or a combined cooling/pressure application mode. The combined heating/pressure application mode and combined cooling/pressure application mode can be configured substantially the same as the respective heating application mode and pressure application mode or cooling application

mode and pressure application mode, but with a respective transmission of combined heating and pressure signal or cooling and pressure signal.

[0234] In an aspect, the processor can be configured to operate in a massage mode to apply massage to one or more specific locations on a user. In massage mode, the processor can transmit a massage application signal to one or more massage application modules.

[0235] In an aspect, the processor can be configured to operate in a haptic modification mode to alter the sense of feel of a user relative to the chair assembly **10**. In haptic modification mode, the processor can transmit a haptic application signal to one or more haptic application modules.

[0236] In an aspect, the processor can be configured to operate in an olfactory modification mode to modify the olfactory environment of a user or the chair assembly **10**. In olfactory modification mode, the processor can transmit an olfactory application signal to one or more olfactory application modules.

[0237] In an aspect, the processor can be configured to operate in a discomfort sensing mode. In discomfort sensing mode, the processor can generate a discomfort sensing signal for use within the processor or for transmission to a separate processor or one or more feature modules. The discomfort sensing mode can be triggered by a user input signal representing a user indication of discomfort, a temperature sensing signal indicating that a

[0238] In an aspect, the processor can be configured to operate in a discomfort prevention mode. Discomfort prevention mode can be triggered by a discomfort sensing signal indicating that the user is experiencing discomfort. In discomfort prevention mode, the processor can activate one or more application modules to reduce the user's discomfort.

[0239] In an aspect, the processor can be configured to operate in a stress sensing mode. In stress sensing mode, the processor can generate a stress sensing signal for use within the processor or for transmission to a separate processor or one or more feature modules.

[0240] In an aspect, the processor can be configured to operate in a stress reduction mode. Stress reduction mode can be triggered by a stress sensing signal indicating that the user is experiencing stress. In stress reduction mode, the processor can activate one or more application modules to reduce the user's stress.

[0241] In an aspect, the processor can be configured to operate in a chair maintenance mode. In the chair maintenance mode, the processor can receive a maintenance sensing signal indicating that the chair assembly **10** is in need of maintenance. The processor can subsequently communicate the need for maintenance to the user, a facilities manager, a repair company, or other individual or group that could attend to the maintenance. The chair maintenance mode can be triggered by sensing an impending or current failure of a part of the chair assembly **10**.

[0242] The chair maintenance mode can be triggered by a user, for example, by a maintenance signal provided to the processor by the user input module indicating that the chair is in need of maintenance in response to a user command at the user input module. For example, a user can identify a damage to the chair assembly **10**, such as a tear in fabric, a malfunctioning feature module, rechargeable power supply, wheel, or cylinder, then the user can command the user input

module to communicate a maintenance signal to the processor, and the processor can notify the appropriate party.

[0243] In an aspect, the processor can be configured to operate in a chair assembly **10** tracking mode. In the chair assembly **10** tracking mode, the processor can interface with one or more sensors that are adapted to determine the location of the chair assembly **10** having a corresponding tag that can be sensed by the one or more sensors, including, but not limited to, RFID sensors and an RFID tag, barcode scanners and a barcode, combinations thereof, and other location sensors and corresponding tags known to those having ordinary skill in the item tracking arts.

[0244] In an aspect, the processor can be configured to operate in a feedback mode to provide feedback to a user, a facilities manager, or other individual or group. In feedback mode, the processor can transmit a feedback signal to the processor or to another external computing device. The feedback mode can provide feedback regarding the occupancy status of a chair assembly **10** or a group of chair assemblies.

[0245] The feedback mode can provide feedback regarding change in a user's weight. Feedback regarding change in a user's weight can be provided to a facility-wide or global database or real-time monitoring, a user-specific database, a visual indicator, such as a display screen, an audio indicator, such as a speaker, or a combination thereof.

[0246] The feedback mode can provide feedback regarding the charge state or charging status of the rechargeable power supply **22**. The feedback regarding the charge state or charging status of the rechargeable power supply **22** can be provided to a facility-wide or global database or real-time monitoring, a visual indicator, such as an LED that indicates that the rechargeable power supply **22** is being charged or is fully charged, an audio indicator that makes a sound when the rechargeable power supply becomes fully charged, or a combination thereof.

[0247] In an aspect, the processor can be configured to operate in an environment adjustment mode. In the environment adjustment mode, the processor can be configured to provide an environment adjustment signal to one or more adjustable features within the environment, such as the lighting within the environment, a desk height, the transparency of selectively-transparent glass in the environment, the positioning of window treatments (e.g., blinds, shades, curtains) in the environment, or a combination thereof.

[0248] In an aspect, the processor can be configured to operate in a power saving mode where the processor prioritizes power delivery to certain function modules based on a pre-determined prioritization.

[0249] In an aspect, the chair assembly **10** can operate in an unpowered mode where the power supply is disconnected or fully discharged. The chair assembly **10** can enter unpowered mode in response to a user instruction from the user input module. In some aspects, a user can interact with the user input module in a fashion that indicates the user's desire to enter the chair assembly into the unpowered mode (for example, by flipping a switch from "powered mode" to "unpowered mode", by pressing a "enter/exit powered/unpowered mode" button, by entering a certain gesture to a touch-pad, or the like), then the user input can send a signal to the processor indicating that unpowered mode is desired. The processor can then send a signal to the power supply that causes the power supply to stop emitting power or causes the power supply to be electrically isolated from the

feature modules. It is therefore evident that the particular embodiments disclosed above may be altered or modified and all such variations are considered within the scope and spirit of the invention. Accordingly, the protection sought herein is as set forth in the claims below.

[0250] Referring to FIG. 21, a chair assembly 10 can be positioned in front of a work surface in a position where a user could use a keyboard 510 on the workstation table or desk 32. The desk 32, the keyboard 510, or both can include one or more remote sensors 512 configured to sense one or more of the properties discussed herein. On top of the desk 32, a monitor 514 can be placed, with an optional camera 516 affixed to the top of the monitor 514 for optically sensing a user that is occupying the chair assembly 10. Also on the desk, a microphone 540 can be positioned for sensing audio from a location remote from the chair. While specific locations are shown for the remote sensors 512, the camera 516, and the microphone 540, it is contemplated that they can be positioned anywhere that they can serve their respective purpose.

[0251] As mentioned briefly above, in some embodiments it is contemplated that a personal device like a cell phone or a wearable device like a wrist band based device may perform various methods that are used with a chair assembly 10. In at least some cases it is contemplated that a chair assembly and other system devices (e.g., feature modules like sensors and actuators) may be able to perform many different functions and processes and that a user may select one or more different processes at her preference to be performed. Here, in at least some cases, a user may access an on line applications web site and download applications to the user's personal device for controlling chair and facility affordances. For instance, the applications may include heating applications that can be used to control heating devices located in the chair seat, backrest, arm rests, etc. In this case, a chair user may control chair heating elements manually via a user input screen on the user's personal device or the user's personal device processor may automatically control chair component heating elements based on sensed data or a programmed heating cycle. As another instance, the applications may include different types of backrest movement applications that can be downloaded to the user's personal device for control backrest position either manually or automatically based on sensed data or user preferences. For example, a user may use an application to select different backrest positions at different times of the day and then, each day, the user's personal device processor 52 may control the chair to cycle through the specified positions when the user's device is proximate the chair and the user is located in the chair. Thus, in some cases a user's personal device processor may control the chair based on any of a large number of user selectable applications that are downloaded from a web site or the like.

[0252] Referring again to FIG. 14, in other embodiments a chair user may use a computer 427 (see FIG. 14) proximate a chair 10 to access applications on a web site and download those applications to either the computer itself to control operations or to the chair processor 58 to control chair and other operations. Again, here, the chair 10 may be purchased with hardware to perform a large number of applications, only a small number of which are enabled or loaded into system processors and thereafter, a user may be able to change the applications run by any of the system processors to fit user preferences.

[0253] As discussed elsewhere, the chair assembly 10 can operate in an occupancy sensing modes. Referring to FIG. 7, the occupancy sensing can be achieved by an intelligent fabric located on the top surface 21 of the seat assembly 16, the front surface 35 of the back assembly 18, or the top surface 55 of the forearm rest member 53; a pressure sensing module located at the front edge portion 23, rear portion 45, first or second lateral portions 41 and 43 of the top surface 21 of the seat assembly 16, the central portion 27, the first or second lateral portions 29 and 31, or the upper or lower portion 141 and 37 of the front surface 35 of the back assembly 18; or the top surface 55 of the forearm rest member 53. A presence sensing switch as described herein can occupy the same locations set forth for the occupancy sensing module.

[0254] In response to a user input indicating availability or a sensed condition that the processor is programmed to interpret as indicating availability, the processor can send an availability signal indicating that the user of the chair is available to the facility-based processor, a separate user's user-based processor, or any other processor remote from the chair assembly 10. This feature allows a facility manager to quickly assess the portion of the workforce that is available to accomplish a specific task or allows a co-worker to determine whether an unscheduled meeting would be welcomed by the user.

[0255] This disclosure contemplates that the aforementioned sensing modules and processors can be utilized to monitor activity of a user, such as movement of a user, sound produced by a user, including talking, and the like.

[0256] This disclosure contemplates that the aforementioned sensing modules and processors can be utilized to measure the frequency or magnitude of a user's muscle action.

[0257] This disclosure contemplates that the aforementioned sensing modules and processors can be utilized to determine the state of the chair assembly 10, such as the height, various angles, rotational movements, and the like.

[0258] This disclosure contemplates that the aforementioned sensing modules, application modules, and processors can be utilized to achieve a therapeutic benefit for a user. For example, the processor can use sensing modules to monitor one or more properties of a user that are related to the user's health, the processor can use application modules to alter one or more properties of a user that are related to the user's health, or a combination thereof.

[0259] This disclosure contemplates that the aforementioned sensing modules, application modules, and processors can be utilized to improve a comfort level of a user. The improvement in comfort level can be automatic, in response to a sensed comfort level that can be determined by a processor using signals from one or more sensing modules that sense a property that is associated with comfort. The automatic comfort improvement can be perceptible by a user or imperceptible by a user. The improvement in comfort level can be user-controlled, in response to a user input signal from a user input. The user-controlled comfort level improvement gives a user the feeling of heightened control over their comfort.

[0260] In at least some embodiments it is contemplated that operating characteristics of the chair may be controlled in a manner that encourages a chair user to behave in desirable or healthy ways. For instance, it is known that a posture in which a user engages fully the upright backrest is,

in general, a relatively healthy posture for a person sitting in a task chair for a period of time. It is also known that many people enjoy having heat applied to their backs for various reasons including therapy, comfort, etc. In a simple case, referring again to FIG. 7, heat may be applied to at least a portion of the front surface of a backrest assembly **18** at one or more locations that a typical chair user's back cannot contact unless the user is sitting in a generally upright position. For instance, heat may be applied to a lower section **37** of a backrest surface below a lumbar region which can only be contacted by a user's lower back when the user has her buttocks pushed back toward the rear portion of the chair seat **16** which is consistent with an upright posture. As another instance, only the central lumbar region **27** of the backrest assembly **18** may be heated so that a chair user is required to sit back against that central section to feel the heat. In other cases one or more of a shoulder support region **141** and/or left or right lumbar regions **29** or **31** may be heated if appropriate to encourage proper posture.

[0261] In still other embodiments heat may be applied to any one or more portions of the top surface of the seat assembly **16** in order to encourage proper posture. For example, see again FIG. 7 where heat may be applied to the rear portion **45** of the top surface of the seat assembly to encourage a seated user to move her buttocks rearward or heat may be applied to one or the other of left and right portions **41** and **43** of the top surface of the seat assembly **16**.

[0262] Referring to FIG. 11, the chair assembly **10** can include motion application modules in the form of motors **39** that can actuate parts of the chair assembly **10**. Motors **39** can also be located anywhere on a chair assembly **10** that application modules are shown.

[0263] The motors **39** can be positioned in the chair assembly **10** at locations where the chair assembly **10** is traditionally configured to move in response to manual motion, such as on a post member **17** that extends upward from the base member **13**, at a joint of a support for the arm assembly **20**, at a joint between the back assembly **18** and the rest of the chair assembly **10**, locations where motion is described elsewhere herein, and the like. The motors **39** can be coupled to a mechanical mechanism that is traditionally located within a chair assembly **10**, such as a hydraulic actuator, an arm articulation mechanism, a back recline mechanism, and the like.

[0264] The motors **39** can also be positioned at locations in the chair assembly **10** to provide motion at locations that are not traditionally associated with motion of a chair assembly **10**, such as a motor **39** positioned to selectively extend a lumbar support in response to a posture sensing signal indicative of a need for lumbar support, a motor **39** positioned to selectively extend an upper back support in response to a posture sensing signal indicative of a need for upper back support, a motor **39** positioned to selectively move the seat assembly **16** backward to bring a user's back into better contact with the back assembly **16** in response to a posture sensing signal indicative of a user not engaging the back assembly **18**, and the like.

[0265] While some motors for moving a chair assembly and adjusting chair assembly component juxtapositions are described above, other motor locations, arrangements and combinations are contemplated. For instance, in some cases one motor may be provided on the post between a chair base and the seat support structure for rotating the seat and other components supported by the support structure to different

angular orientations relative to the base. Here, a second motor may be mounted to a caster for moving the chair about in a space. In this case, the first and second motors should be able to move and angularly orient the chair assembly in essentially any location and orientation within a space that is not blocked by other affordances. Many other motor combinations for moving a chair are contemplated.

[0266] As another example of a motion application module, the chair assembly can include one or more airbags that inflate in response to a signal from a processor to move the top surface **21** of the seat assembly **16** or the top surface **55** of the forearm rest member **53** substantially upward and downward, or the front surface **35** of the back assembly **18** substantially forward and backward. The airbags can also provide movement along any of the contours of the surfaces described herein. Airbags can be located at the front edge portion **23**, rear portion **45**, first or second lateral portions **41** and **43** of the top surface **21** of the seat assembly **16**, the central portion **27**, the first or second lateral portions **29** and **31**, or the upper or lower portion **141** and **37** of the front surface **35** of the back assembly **18**; or the top surface **55** of the forearm rest member **53**.

[0267] In some cases chair settings may be altered as a function of a user's weight, size, height or other body dimensions (e.g., leg length, arm length, torso dimensions) that may be sensed prior to or while the user is supported by the chair. For instance, in some cases where airbags are provided in a seat or backrest assembly, the amount of air in the airbags may be adjusted based on a measured weight of a chair user. In other cases, where a user has particularly long arms, chair arm rests may be moved forward to support a user's arms in an optimal fashion.

[0268] It is also known that in many cases, while an upright posture is generally healthy, movement of a chair user's body during a several hour period is also generally advantageous. In at least some embodiments chair conditions may be changed over time to encourage movement and other healthy behaviors. For instance, in the case where heat can be applied to different locations on the front surface of a backrest assembly or the top surface of a seat or both, in at least some cases a system processor (e.g., **52**, **54**, **58**, etc.) may be programmed to cycle heat to different locations on the surfaces thereby encouraging the seat user to move to continue to feel the applied heat. Thus, referring again to FIG. 7, heat may first be applied to the lower back portion **37** of backrest assembly **18** for 15 minutes. After the first 15 minute period, heat may be applied to the top portion **141** of the backrest assembly **18** for the next 15 minutes. Then, heat may be applied to the left portion **29** of the backrest assembly for 15 minutes and then applied to the right hand portion for 15 minutes and then the cycle of moving heat may be repeated. The heat cycle described herein is only exemplary and many other heat cycles are contemplated.

[0269] While heated surfaces are one good way to encourage healthy behavior of a chair user, other actuators and application modules are contemplated that achieve a similar purpose. For instance, referring again to FIG. 7, in at least some embodiments, some type of vibrating element may be located at different locations on the front surface of the backrest assembly **18** or the top surface or an edge of the seat assembly **16** that can be felt when a portion of a user's body contacts the surface(s). Again, for instance, a vibrating mechanism may be mounted at the lower back region **37** or the upper back region **35** to encourage optimal posture. As

another instance, a cooling element or some device that cools may be provided at any surface location to encourage optimal posture or any other positional behavior by a chair user.

[0270] In still other cases one or more sensors may be used to ascertain if a chair user's behavior is optimized and if not, the chair may disallow certain chair features until the behavior is optimized. For instance, in the case of posture and application of heat to encourage optimal posture, a system processor may only apply heat when a user is sitting in one of several pre-designated postures and may turn off the heat when the user is not sitting in one of the pre-designated postures. Similarly, vibration or any other haptic effect may be available in select pre-designated postures. In some cases, heat, vibration, and other haptic effects may be available when a user changes postures regularly.

[0271] As yet one other instance, heat, vibration or any other pleasing effect may only be applied for specific durations and may be turned off for other periods and until some required activity occurs. For instance, to encourage a chair user to periodically get up and take a short walk, chair heat may only be enabled for 45 minutes at a time and then be off for 15 minutes encouraging a break. In other cases the heat may remain off until a chair user has gotten up and left the chair for at least 5 minutes. Thus, if the user remained in the chair for one and a half hours straight without getting up, heat would be applied for 45 minutes and then be turned off for the remaining 45 minutes (e.g., until the user got up for at least five minutes). In this case, if the user got up and took a walk immediately after the initial 45 minutes, the heat would be re-enabled after the user is absent for the 5 minute interim period.

[0272] In at least some embodiments it is contemplated that a chair assembly 10 may include components so that at least some aspects of the chair assembly are automatically adjustable to optimally support a chair user that is in a less than optimal position on the chair assembly. In particular, because motors are added to at least some chair embodiments, the motors can be used to drive chair components into supporting positions relative to a user. To this end, see FIG. 22 that shows a chair backrest assembly 18 that includes first and second motors 448 and 452 that are arranged at upper 456 and lower 454 portions of the backrest assembly 18. Here, the motors are shown schematically and would be linked to the assembly 18 so that motor 448 can be controlled to push the top end of the backrest assembly 18 forward and pull the top end backward to adjust the forward-rearward position of top end 456 and motor 452 could be controlled to push the bottom end 454 of backrest assembly 18 forward and pull the bottom end rearward to adjust the forward-rearward position of the bottom end 454. For example, the top end 456 may be able to move through a range of between two inches and ten inches.

[0273] Similarly, the bottom or lower end 454 may be able to move through a range between two and ten inches. In this case, if a chair user is slouching with his buttocks near a central portion of chair seat 16 and spaced away from the rear portion of the seat, the rear portion 454 of the backrest assembly may be pushed forward so that a front surface thereof contacts the lower portion of the user's back and provides some support. The upper portion 456 may similarly be moved about to support the upper portion of a chair user's back automatically in a similar fashion.

[0274] In still other cases it is contemplated that a chair assembly may move components automatically to make contact with and provide support to a user's back or other portions of the user's body when a user maintains a less than optimal position long term. The chair assembly may also be controlled to apply an appealing effect like heat or vibration. In some cases, it may then, over time, move back into a position or positions consistent with a preferred back position to encourage the user to reorient himself into a different posture. Thus, for instance, referring again to FIG. 22, in some cases the lower portion 454 of the backrest assembly 18 may be moved forward 8 inches to contact a user's lower back surface. Then, heat may be applied to the lower portion of the backrest front surface (see 37 in FIG. 7).

[0275] After a set time interval, e.g., one minute, of heat application, the lower portion of the backrest assembly may be moved rearward by one inch while still applying heat. If the user moves his lower back rearward to maintain contact with the heated portion of the seat, after another minute, the lower portion of the backrest assembly may be moved another inch rearward, again, encouraging movement of the user's lower back rearward and toward an optimal posture position. This coaxing would continue in an effort to cause the user to move into a different and preferred posture. If, at any time a user does not follow the coaxing action, the action may be reversed to again provide support for the user in the user's selected posture and the coaxing may either end or recommence.

[0276] In at least some embodiments the system processors may control chair operations as a function of sensed conditions of the chair user. For instance, based on different temperatures sensed at different locations within the seat 16, backrest assembly 18 and the arm rest members 20 either instantaneously or over time as the temperatures change, one of the processors may be programmed to discern either that a chair user is in pain or will likely experience pain in some part of her body (e.g., lower back, left arm, leg, etc.). Here, based on the discerned physiological parameter, the processor may control motors, heat elements, etc., in the chair assembly in some fashion calculated to eliminate perceived pain or to avoid likely pain. For instance, chair motors may be automatically controlled to change relative juxtapositions of chair components to change the physical positioning of the chair user in some calculated fashion. As another instance, chair sensors or images from a camera in the ambient may generate data that can be used to determine that a chair user is fidgeting and likely uncomfortable. In this case, a heating element in the lumbar region of the chair may be activated to apply heat in an effort to the user's lower back to increase comfort.

[0277] In cases where different people use the same chair at different times as in conference rooms, in hotelling spaces, etc., in some cases chair activities and functions may be automatically adjusted based on user identity. Thus, for instance, if one user prefers a set of five functions and a specific set of adjustments on her chair and a second user prefers a set of four other functions and a second specific set of adjustments, in at least some cases user identity and location may be determined (e.g., via triangulation of a user's personal computing device, an identification badge that includes an RF tag or some type of ID transmitter, biometrics, etc.) and, just prior to or after a user sits in a chair, the chair features may be adjusted and functions used to control chair components and features.

[0278] In some cases a chair may be programmed to operate differently at different times of day. For instance, in the morning a chair may apply heat, in the afternoon, after a lunch break, the chair may apply cooling and in the late afternoon, the chair may perform some vibration or massage activity. Similarly, a chair may be programmed to perform different functions based on different activities a user is performing or participating in or to perform different functions based on what a user is scheduled to be doing at different times. For instance, when a user is scheduled to be in a private focused session, the chair may perform heating, vibration, massage, support in a lounging position as opposed to an upright position, etc. When the same user is scheduled to be in a conference room with several other people during a collaboration session, the chair may force or strongly encourage an upright posture and may not perform massage or vibrating activities. Other schedule based control of the chair assembly 10 is contemplated and to support such functions, one or more system processor 52, 54, 58, etc., may have access to scheduling information maintained by a facility or enterprise server.

[0279] Worker wellbeing is an important focal point for many organizations because of the cultural, environmental, and economic implications wellbeing may have. Wellbeing—often characterized as an individual’s health, happiness, satisfaction, physical state, and/or mental state—may be measured and assessed in a variety of ways. In certain circumstances, a worker’s physical environment may impact various aspects of wellbeing. For example, aspects of wellbeing that may be impacted by a worker’s physical environment include optimism, which may be essential for fostering creativity and innovation; mindfulness, which may allow a worker to engage more fully with the task at hand; a realization that a worker can be authentically himself or herself; a sense of belonging or connecting to others; a feeling that professional contributions have a meaning or a sense of purpose; and an ability to experience a workplace full of vitality that encourages workers actively to experience multiple aspects of the physical environment.

[0280] Wellbeing may be improved by communicating with a worker in a manner that seeks to increase his or her movement during the day, to engage more fully with his or her work, and to create a supportive and positive environment, among other things. In particular, communicating with a worker, may allow him or her to identify ways to optimize his or her interaction with the physical environment in a way that improves optimism, mindfulness, authenticity, belonging, meaning, or vitality. Various embodiments of the disclosed system collect and analyze data relevant to a worker’s wellbeing and communicate information back to the worker in an effort to improve his or her wellbeing.

[0281] FIG. 23 illustrates a system 600 for providing information to a user of an article of furniture. System 600 may be used in a variety of ways including collecting and analyzing data from users, encouraging or rewarding users, assisting users in maintaining mental engagement with their work, facilitating improved communication between users, and helping users identify or create ideal work environments. System 600 includes a plurality of users 602, displays 604, sensors 610, chairs 614, and tables 616. System 600 also includes gateways 620 and processor 630. System 600 includes a variety of places including an office building 650 and a personalized work space 652. In particular embodiments, system 600 may include any number of suitable users

602, displays 604, sensors 610, and articles of furniture, including but not limited to chairs 614 and tables 616. Similarly, system 600 may include any suitable number of gateways 620 and processors 630 or other system components.

[0282] Users 602 include a collection of workers affiliated with an organization, who have a variety of roles. At least one user 602j may have responsibility for the organization. This organizational user 602j may be a facility manager, a facilities planner, an operations manager, a purchasing professional, or any professional with responsibility for space utilization, worker wellbeing, worker retention, or other pursuits valuable to the organization. Users 602 may be associated with one or more displays 604. For example, user 602a, 602c, 602d, 602f, 602g, and 602h are each associated with a display 604 that is included in a personal computer such as a tablet, laptop, or mobile phone. User 602f is associated with a display 604 in a wearable computer such as a watch or glasses. User 602i is associated with a display 604 that is embedded in table 616. User 602j is associated with a display 604 configured at his personal workstation. Users 602b and 602e aren’t illustrated with associated displays. These users may have a personal computer such as a tablet or laptop, a wearable computer such as a watch or eyewear, or may additionally or alternatively rely on displays embedded in their surrounding environments.

[0283] Several of chairs 614 and tables 616 include a coupled sensor 610. These sensors may be embedded in the chairs 614 and tables 616 and may or may not be perceivable to users 602. In some embodiments, some or all furniture within system 600 may have one or more sensors 610.

[0284] Personalized work space 652 includes sensor 610 configured to sense information about users 602 in or near work space 652. Including sensor 610 within work space 652 allows system 600 to sense information about a particular user 602 even when he is not in physical contact with chair 614 or other furniture within work space 652.

[0285] Gateways 620 allow sensors 610 and other devices such as the tablets, laptops, phones, and wearables mentioned above to relay information to processor 630. Processor 630 analyzes information from sensors 610 and these devices and may provide information to users 602. Information from processor 630 may include collective information regarding a group of users 602 or may include information about a particular user 602. Processor 630 may send information to an individual user, a group of users, or to the organizational user 602j. Information from processor 630 may be displayed on displays 604.

[0286] System 600 may include a variety of additional or alternate components that facilitate communication with users 602. For example, system 600 may include additional sensors, gateways, displays, and furniture. System 600 may include greater or fewer users 602. These users 602 may all be located within building 650 or may be positioned at a variety of locations within an organization’s campus. Alternatively, one or more users 602 may be working in a location geographically remote from one or more of the other users 602. For example, organizational user 602j may be located in building 650 on a central campus, while user 602a is located at a second location and user 602i is located at a third location. The number of locations within system 600 may be equal to, greater than, or less than the number of users 602. The number of chairs 614 and tables 616 within system 600 may be correlated to the number of users 602, including a

historical number of users **602**, a current number of users **602**, or an anticipated future number of users **602**. Chairs **614** may include office-style task chairs, guest chairs, lounge style chairs, stools, and any other known furniture designed to accommodate a seated user. In various embodiments, a variety of furniture equipped with one or more sensors **610** may be included in system **600**, including chairs, stools, panels, lounge style furniture such as sofas, tables, desks, shelving, or storage units. Although FIG. 23 illustrates via dashed lines possible paths of data transmission between particular system components, the sensors, displays, and personal devices described in conjunction with FIGS. 23 through 33 may be able to transmit data to any number of system components, including processors, gateways, other sensors, other displays, and other personal devices, regardless of the presence of an illustrated dashed line. FIG. 24 illustrates a block diagram **700** that portrays additional details of a communication system, similar to system **600**. Block diagram **700** includes sensors **710a-c**, a power source **712**, a gateway **720**, a server **736**, a processor **730**, software **732**, and storage **734**.

[0287] Sensors **710** sense data about the environment and/or users, similar to users **602** described in conjunction with FIG. 23, and provide data to server **736** via gateway **720**. Sensors **710** may communicate with gateway **720** over a local area network (LAN) through a wired or wireless connection. For example, as illustrated, sensors **710a** and **710c** send data to gateway **720** absent any hard wired connection, instead sending data wirelessly. Sensor **710b** is wired to gateway **720** and transmits data through this wired connection. Sensor **710b** may also receive power through its wired connection with gateway **720**. Sensor **710a** receives power from power source **712**. Power source **712** may provide power in a variety of ways, for example, through a low voltage transformer or a battery, from harvested energy, wirelessly through inductive coupling or resonant inductive coupling, or in any other known way. Sensor **710c** does not have a separate power source and may instead rely on piezoelectric technology or other technology to provide sufficient energy for transmitting information to gateway **720**. Depending on the embodiment, sensors **710** may employ a range of technologies. For example, sensors **710** may detect heat or pressure changes, may detect touch, or may detect changes in a variety of health indicators. Certain sensors **710** may rely on Bluetooth, iBeacon, or near field communication technology. In some embodiments, sensors **710** may include an accelerometer.

[0288] Sensors **710** may be present in a variety of locations within an organization's environment. Sensors **710** may be embedded in an article of furniture, such as a chair or table, similar to chairs **614** and table **616** in FIG. 23. In some embodiments, sensors **710** may be embedded in or coupled to a wall, partition, ceiling, or floor. Sensors **710** may also be associated with a user, present, for example, in a user's identification badge or mobile communication device (e.g., a smart phone, in a wrist worn device, etc).

[0289] Gateway **720** relays information to server **736** and may be coupled to server **736** via a LAN or wide area network (WAN). Gateway **720** may be any device suitable to receive, aggregate, and/or relay information from sensors **710a-c**, including, for example, a wireless router or a Room Wizard™. Gateway **720** may include existing technology affiliated with other services of an organization or may be provided to an organization specifically for use with sensors

710. In some embodiments, more than one gateway **720** may be used to optimize performance. For example, the number and/or positioning of gateways may depend on the number and/or positioning of sensors **710**.

[0290] As information from one or more sensors **710** reaches server **736**, software **732** may determine how the information is processed. In this embodiment, a software module **732a** commands processor **730** to perform a variety of tasks, including those functions described in conjunction with FIG. 25. For example, processor **730** may analyze incoming data related to a user's posture, occupancy, mental engagement, or other factors. Processor **730** may make determinations or conclusions about a user or group of users based on incoming data. Processor **730** may also relay information or send conclusions to a user or group of users. Incoming data from sensors **710**, other incoming data or inputs, conclusions, and other data may be stored in storage **734**.

[0291] In various embodiments, server **736** may be a virtual server or may represent a cluster of servers. Some or all portions of the block diagram may be located physically on site at an organization's location and some or all may be stored remotely in the cloud. For example, in one embodiment, server **736** may physically include processor **730** while software **732**, software module **732a**, and storage **734** are located in a remote or cloud server. In another embodiment, only software **732** or storage **734** may be located in a remote or cloud server. Software module **732a** may additionally communicate with a variety of other servers, processors, hardware, and software located in server **736** or in other servers or other locations. For example, software module **732a** may communicate with a second server to ensure that a user's calendar or reservation information is up-to-date.

[0292] FIG. 25 illustrates a system **800** for providing information to a user of an article of furniture, similar to systems **600** and **700** described above. In particular embodiments, system **800** senses information about a user and solicits feedback from the user to confirm conclusions related to the sensed information. System **800** includes users **802a** and **802j**, a display **804**, sensor **810**, and a chair **814**. System **800** also includes a gateway **820** and a processor **830**.

[0293] User **802a** is a worker affiliated with an organization. User **802a** may have a variety of responsibilities. User **802j** is also affiliated with the organization and has responsibility for the organization in some capacity. For example, user **802j** may be a facility manager or human resources professional.

[0294] User **802a** is associated with display **804**. In this embodiment, display **804** is included in user **802a**'s assigned tablet. In other embodiments, display **804** may be included in a variety of devices or environmental locations.

[0295] User **802a** typically has display **804** with him throughout the workday including when he is seated in chair **814**. Chair **814** may be user **802a**'s assigned chair, or may be unassigned, and is equipped with sensor **810**. In one embodiment, sensor **810** may include the ability to sense changes in pressure. In another embodiment, sensor **810** may additionally include an accelerometer and the ability to sense movement of the chair. Sensor **810** may be powered via a battery, a harvested energy source, or in any variety of known ways.

[0296] In some embodiments, chair **814** may include multiple sensors **810** that each has different capabilities. Possible additional sensors **810a** are illustrated in dashed lines. In one embodiment, sensors **810a** coupled to the back of chair **814** may include accelerometers and sensors **810a** coupled to the seat of chair **814** may include the ability to sense pressure and/or heat changes. The number of sensors **810** coupled to chair **814** may depend on cost, manufacturing considerations, organizational requirements, or other factors.

[0297] Sensor **810** senses information about user **802a** including when he sits down in chair **814** and the duration of his stay. Sensor **810** senses information about how user **802a** is sitting in the chair including whether he is relatively still or whether he has begun to move or shift in chair **814**. Sensor **810** also senses posture information, including whether user **802a** is sitting upright, reclining, perching near a front edge chair **814**, or other information. Sensor **810** sends some or all of this data to processor **830** via gateway **820**.

[0298] Processor **830** processes this data and draws one of more conclusions based on the data. For example, processor **830** may conclude that chair **814** is occupied. Occupancy determinations may also include more specific conclusions. For example, processor **830** may conclude based on the rate of occupancy that chair **814** is in a preferred location within the business enterprise, that chair **814** is a preferred seat for workers of the business enterprise, and/or that chair **814** is a preferred seat for user **802a**. Processor **830** may conclude that user **802a** has been sitting for an extended period of time and would benefit from a change in posture, for example, by standing up. When the data from sensor **810** indicates that user **802a** had previously been sitting relatively still and has now begun to shift or fidget in his chair **814**, processor **830** may conclude that user **802a** has become distracted or is beginning to lose focus on his current task. Conversely, user **802a** may be a consistent “mover” in his chair during the workday and any reduction or slowing of movement may indicate that user **802a** is no longer engaged with his work. Similarly, processor **830** may conclude that user **802a** is struggling to remain mentally engaged because he is reclining in his chair despite engaging in a task that usually keeps him sitting upright. In some embodiments, processor **830** may conclude from an increase in body or ambient temperature that user **802a** would benefit from a change in location. Processor **830** may reach a variety of conclusions based on the data for a user or users depending on the data and any software present in system **800**, similar to software **732** described in conjunction with FIG. **24**.

[0299] Conclusions made by processor **830** are based on objective data from sensor **810**. Processor **830** may rely on software or other applications stored on the same server or in a remote location to draw conclusions about the objective data from sensor **810**. In some embodiments of system **800**, processor **830** will send one or more instructions to an application affiliated with user **802a** for display on display **804**. This instruction may cause display **804** to display information based on the objective data. The instruction may additionally or alternately solicit information from user **802a** related to the conclusion of processor **830**. In some embodiments, user **802a** can provide any solicited input via a yes/no answer, through a multiple choice style answer, or by

entering free standing text. For example, display **814** may pose one or more questions to user **802a** about occupancy, posture, or focus, including:

- [0300] Is this your preferred location?
- [0301] Is this your preferred seat?
- [0302] What is your preferred seat?
- [0303] Do you prefer to sit upright or recline in a lounge position for your current type of work?
- [0304] Have you been sitting most of the morning?
- [0305] Have you been predominantly sitting today?
- [0306] Have you been predominantly sitting this week?
- [0307] Are you feeling engaged with your work?
- [0308] Are you feeling less engaged with your work than you were 15 minutes ago?
- [0309] Is your environment allowing you to focus?
- [0310] What is the ideal environment for your current type of work?
- [0311] Has an environmental distraction made it more difficult for you to focus?
- [0312] Has an environmental distraction made it more difficult for you to focus now that it was 15 minutes ago?
- [0313] What is the ideal environment for the work you expect to do later today?
- [0314] What is the ideal environment for the majority of your work?
- [0315] When do you most need to deviate from your ideal environment?
- [0316] User **802a** can use display **804** as an interface to provide input and answer questions. Information solicited from user **802a** and related to user **802a**'s subjective understandings and perceptions may then be relayed by user **802a**'s tablet or other device associated with display **804** back to processor **830**.
- [0317] Upon receipt of user **802a**'s subjective data, processor **830** can develop an output about user **802a** based on his objective and subjective feedback. For example, processor **830** may determine that user **802a** has been shifting in his seat and he confirmed his change in engagement through his subjective feedback; processor **830** may then send an output to user **802a** encouraging him to take a break, go for a walk, or change locations. As another example, processor **830** may determine that user **802a** has been sitting relatively still for a longer than recommended time and has confirmed his focus has begun to wane; processor **830** may then send an output to user **802a** encouraging him to stand up and continue working.
- [0318] In an additional example, processor **830** may determine that the body temperature or ambient temperature near user **802a** is rising and he has confirmed that he prefers cooler environments; processor **830** may send an output to user **802a** encouraging him to change location and may even include a suggestion about a possible preferred location. These and other outputs may be displayed for user **802a** via display **804**. Other outputs may encourage other changes or actions to improve user **802a**'s physical or mental health or engagement.
- [0319] In some embodiments, system **800** may include, and processor **830** may have access to, additional information about user **802a** including identity, type of responsibilities, current tasks, and preferred work settings generally or for specific tasks. User **802a** may provide this information initially or on an on-going basis. Processor **830** may also have access to information about a variety of work envi-

ronments within the organization. As a result, in embodiments where processor **830** has access to information about user **802a**'s current task and preferred environments for specific tasks, processor **830** may be able to provide a recommendation to user **802a** that he should consider moving from chair **814** to a particular alternative location more suitable for the task. In certain embodiments, this recommendation may occur as soon as system **800** detects that user **802a** has begun a new task or may occur upon concluding that he is losing focus in his present location.

[0320] In certain embodiments, processor **830** may send an output about user **802a** based on the objective and/or the subjective data to user **802j**. In embodiments of system **800** that include a group of workers like user **802a**, processor **830** may send an output to user **802j** about the group of workers based on the objective and/or subject data of each member of the group or about the aggregated members. User **802j** may use information received from system **800** to evaluate occupancy within the organization, to assess productivity associated with specific locations or tasks, group mental engagement, group wellbeing as it relates to health and satisfaction, or other factors. This information may be especially valuable to user **802j** when one or more users are working from remote locations.

[0321] System **800** may learn about user **802a** over time. For example, system **800** may come to determine based on user **802a**'s objective and subjective data that when user **802a** starts to shift in chair **814** in a particular window of time, for example, before lunch, he is likely to be losing focus, while when user **802a** starts to shift in chair **814** in a different window of time, for example, after lunch, he is not losing focus. Or system **800** may sense user **802a** shifting posture to a position perched on the front edge of chair **814** and user **802a** may confirm that he is losing focus when he shifts to "perch" while completing one task but not another. System **800** may receive the same objective data from sensor **810** in either scenario, but may receive different subjective feedback from user **802a** regarding his degree of focus or engagement with his work depending on the circumstances. This may allow system **800** to forego or limit the instances where it solicits feedback from user **802a**. In this embodiment, when system **800** receives objective data from sensor **810**, it may not solicit additional feedback from user **802a**, instead relying on subjective feedback received on a previous day or days, and sends an output for display encouraging user **802a** to take action. For example, when the sensor data indicates a change and system **800** predicts user **802a** may be losing focus, it may encourage him to stand up and continue working, seek an alternative work location, or take a break.

[0322] FIG. 26 illustrates a method **900** of providing information to a user of an article of furniture, similar to systems **600**, **700**, and **800** discussed above. In particular embodiments, method **900** is directed toward sensing information about a user and soliciting feedback from the user to confirm the sensed information. Method **900** begins at step **910** by sensing a first data set about a user of an article of furniture through the use of a sensor. In certain embodiments, the sensor is coupled to an article of furniture such as a chair or table. In other embodiments, the sensor may instead be coupled to a wall, partition, ceiling, or floor such that it can collect information about a user of furniture within the environment. The first data set in certain environments is data collected by the sensor without knowledge

and/or input from the user, similar to the objective data discussed above in conjunction with FIG. 25.

[0323] Method **900** continues with steps **920** and **930** that include sending the first data set to a processor and generating a conclusion based on the first data set, respectively. The processor may receive data from the sensor disclosed in step **910**. In certain embodiments, the processor may receive the data via a gateway. Upon receipt of the data from the sensor, the processor is able to generate one or more conclusions. Depending on the type of information collected by the sensor, the processor's conclusions may include determinations about the furniture's usage or occupancy, about the duration of occupancy, about the user's posture, and/or about the user's mental focus or engagement with his work. For example, the first data set may indicate that the user has begun to shift or move within the chair and the processor may conclude that the user is beginning to lose focus on his current task. In various embodiments, the first data set may include any type of information that can be sensed about a user using the sensor.

[0324] Step **940** includes generating a second data set about the user through input by the user, where the input relates to the conclusion. In various embodiments, information is solicited from the user that relates to the conclusion described in step **930**. The user may be able to receive questions and provide feedback via a display associated with a personal device, such as a computer, laptop, tablet, mobile phone, watch, glasses, clothing, or other device. The display may also be positioned somewhere within the user's environment, for example in a table or wall. The solicited information may include questions designed to provide subjective feedback and/or confirmation on the conclusion. For example, if the processor's conclusion includes a determination that the user is beginning to lose focus on his current task, the input solicited by the user may be focused on the user's level of focus or engagement with his work. This input comprises a second data set about the user. In certain embodiments, the second data set may include a range of information about the user, including the user's preferences regarding his preferred work environment, his preferred work environments for specific tasks, his preferred ways of improving his perceived wellbeing, his preferred methods to increase his physical activity, his preferred ways to increase his mental focus and engagement, and other preferences regarding his work and work environment.

[0325] Method **900** continues with steps **950** and **960** that include, respectively, sending the second data set to the processor and generating an output about the user based on the first data set and second data set. In certain embodiments, the output about the user based on the first data set and second data set includes a recommendation for the user, for example, a recommendation the user change posture or location to increase his engagement with his work. The output may additionally or alternatively be based on the conclusion discussed above in conjunction with step **930**. In particular embodiments, the output may include a metric about the conclusion. For example, the system may sense a user routinely selecting a certain seat or a particular setting for a chair or table, a selection which the user validates through user input and the generation of the second data set; the output in this circumstance may be tailored to recommend the desired or a related seat or setting to the user in the future.

[0326] Step 970 concludes method 900 by sending this output to the user. In various embodiments, this output is displayed to the user via the display described in conjunction with step 940.

[0327] Method 900 may additionally or alternately include other steps. For example, in certain embodiments, the method may proceed fully or partially with respect to a group of users and some or all of the data about the group may be sent to a facilities manager. In some embodiments, outputs about a user or a group of users may be sent to an organizational user, such as a facilities manager. Outputs sent to an organizational user (an organizational output) may include the user outputs previously sent to one or more users. In some embodiments, the information included in an organizational output may include aggregated information about the number of users within the system, partial or overall occupancy rates of furniture and/or particular environments within the system, usage rates of the communication system, types or numbers of outputs sent to users within the system, or any other information that may be stored within the system.

[0328] A related method may include identifying a selected position for a sensor within a work environment that is appropriate to sense a first data set about a user of an article of furniture within the work environment; placing the sensor in the selected position; creating a network between at least the sensor, a processor, and a device configured to solicit a second data set from a user; ensuring the sensor is configured to send the first data set to the processor; and ensuring the processor is configured to receive the first data set from the sensor and the second data set from the device, to generate an output about the user based on the first data set and the second data set, and to send the output to the user.

[0329] An additional, related method may include creating a system for collecting information about a group of users by providing a plurality or group of furniture in a work environment, providing a group of sensors that are positioned within the work environment and are configured to sense individual data sets about each of the users of the furniture; and providing a processor configured to receive the individual data sets from the sensors, to generate a plurality or number of conclusions, where each conclusion is based on one of the individual data sets, to receive input data sets, where each input data set results from input from one user and relates to one conclusion, to generate outputs, where each output is based on at least one of the individual data sets and one of the input data sets, and to send one or more outputs to one or more of the users.

[0330] The type of information included in a user output and/or organizational output may also be determined based on the nature of sensed information and/or information input by the user. FIG. 27 includes a schematic diagram 980 illustrating how information collected by a sensor or sensors or provided by a user or group of users may be shared with an organizational user. On the left side of schematic 980, information is more generic and potentially less sensitive. Generic data might include information regarding whether a chair is occupied by any user during working hours and may exclude any identifying information about the user. Moving from left to right data becomes less generic; it starts to become more personal in nature and more sensitive. Moderately personal information may include information about where a user prefers to work during the day or his or her preferred conference room and the corresponding amenities

or settings. A user may identify this data as moderately sensitive and may allow it to be shared, in some cases without his identifying information (e.g., in the aggregate). On the right side of schematic 980, data is highly personal and potentially highly sensitive. Highly personal data might include a health characteristic of a user as measured by a sensor in a chair. A user may identify this or other data as highly sensitive and may not allow it to be shared with anyone under any circumstances.

[0331] The scope of data shared with an organizational user in some embodiments is illustrated with bubble 982. Bubble 982 includes generic information for single users and groups of users and moderately personal information for groups of users; it does not include any highly personal data associated individual users or groups of users in the system. Bubble 984 illustrates the type of data shared with an individual user in some embodiments. Bubble 984 includes highly and moderately personal information about the user, but does not include generic information about users or groups of users. In certain cases, bubbles 982 and 984 may overlap or take on other shapes within schematic 980.

[0332] FIG. 28 illustrates a system 1000 for providing information to a user of an article of furniture, similar to systems described in conjunction with FIGS. 23-27. In particular embodiments, system 1000 provides information to a user, similar to users 602 and 802 described in conjunction with FIGS. 23 and 25, for the purpose of encouraging, motivating, coaching, changing, or rewarding behavior. System 1000 includes users 1002a and 1002j, displays 1004a and 1004j, sensors 1010, chair 1014, table 1016, gateway 1020, and processor 1030. Any number of users, displays, sensors, furniture, gateways, processors, and other components may be included in various embodiments.

[0333] User 1002a is a worker affiliated with an organization and may have a variety of responsibilities. User 1002j is also affiliated with the organization and has responsibility for the organization in some capacity, for example, as a facility manager, real estate planner, human resources professional, wellbeing coach, or health professional. In some embodiments, users 1002a and 1002j may be located in the same building or on the same campus. In other embodiments, users 1002a and 1002j may be geographically remote from one another.

[0334] User 1002a is associated with display 1004a. In this embodiment, display 1004a is included in user 1002a's watch. In other embodiments, display 1004a may be included in a variety of environmental locations or devices, such as a laptop computer, tablet computer, personal phone, or other wearable device.

[0335] Chair 1014 is equipped with sensor 1010. Similar to the sensors described previously in conjunction with FIGS. 23, 24, 25, and 26, sensor 1010 may sense changes in pressure, temperature, movement, other environmental changes, and/or a variety of health factors. Because sensor 1010 may sense changes in pressure, temperature, or movement of chair 1014, it is able to collect information that may be useful to user 1002a regarding his posture, the duration he has been sitting, or the likelihood that he might benefit from a change in location, activity, or posture. As stated with respect to sensor 810 and chair 814, in some embodiments chair 1014 may include more than one sensor and these sensors may be positioned anywhere on chair 1014, for example sensors may be embedded in or coupled to a seat, back, headrest, arms, pedestal, base, or casters.

[0336] As sensor 1010 collects data about user 1002a it transmits some or all of the data to processor 1030 via gateway 1020. Sensor 1010 may transmit data continuously as it is collected or at regular or irregular intervals. The timing of sensor 1010's transmissions may be established based on the purpose of system 1000, the needs of system 1000's users including users 1002a and 1002j, and/or determined by a user including organizational user 1002j. In some embodiments, sensor 1010 may transmit information to a processor in an alternative way. For example, gateway 1020 may be omitted or sensor 1010 may share information with an intermediate collection device that relays the information to processor 1030.

[0337] Processor 1030 processes the data it receives from sensor 1010. Processor 1030 also receives and processes one or more inputs from organizational user 1002j. Relying on data received from sensor 1010 and input received from organizational user 1002j, processor 1030 generates one or more conclusions, which may include an output suitable to send to user 1002a. In certain embodiments, input from organizational user 1002j may direct the types of outputs user 1002a should receive. For example, an input may direct processor 1030 to provide encouragement or motivation to change behavior.

[0338] One or more inputs from organizational user 1002j may be received by processor 1030 as it receives data from sensor 1010. Inputs may alternatively or additionally be received prior to or after any data from sensor 1010. In various embodiments, organizational user 1002j may provide one or more inputs to processor 1030 on a regular basis, for example, a new input or inputs may be received by system 1000 every quarter, month, week, or weekday. The interval of the inputs may be tailored to current business indicators of the organization or other factors.

[0339] The content of the inputs may also be tailored. For example, in circumstances where financial indicators of the organization are positive, the output might include a reward that has a cost to the organization, such as offering the user a cup of coffee or a meal "on the house" or paid for by the organization. In particular embodiments, the content of the input from organizational user 1002j may include information about particular users or groups of users.

[0340] Further, the input from organizational user 1002j may also include information on the threshold or requirement that must be achieved by a user to receive the reward. Once processor 1020 determines that data from sensor 1010, associated with 1002a, has surpassed the threshold or satisfied the requirement, processor 1020 generates an output to send to user 1002a. For example, one input from organizational user 1002j may include a condition that if a user has been sitting for longer than a set period of time, such as 2 hours, he or she should be encouraged to change posture and stand up. In this example, processor 1030 receives this input from organizational user 1002j; once processor 1030 receives data from sensor 1010 that user 1002a in chair 1014 has been sitting for more than the prescribed period of time, processor 1030 generates a conclusion that user 1002a had been sitting for the prescribed period of time and should now change posture. Processor 1030 then sends the output to user 1002a.

[0341] In an additional example, another input from organizational user 1002j may include information designed to encourage or reward user 1002a under certain circumstances. For example, organizational user 1002j may provide

an input that user 1002a may be rewarded for continuous focus on a given task. The input may outline that user 1002a may be rewarded by an offer for a snack or beverage, a message of encouragement from user 1002a's superior or team, a change in work location or duration, or any variety of other positive feedback or accolades.

[0342] Inputs may depend on multiple aspects of a data set or data sets attributed to user 1002a in certain embodiments. For example, the input from organizational user 1002j may direct the processor to recommend that the user take a break and stretch after he has been sitting for longer than a prescribed time and has begun to fidget in chair 1014. Once sensor 1010 data indicates that user 1002a has been sitting for longer than the prescribed time and has begun to shift in chair 1014, processor 1030 generates an output that can be sent to user 1002a encouraging him to get up and take a break and stretch.

[0343] In some embodiments, processor 1030 may rely on additional data sources in generating an output, including, for example, a personal or corporate calendar, local weather information, information from other places within the organization, data input by user 1002a similar to the input described in conjunction with FIG. 25, or any useful data source relevant to the organizational user input or the system user. For example, when processor 1030 receives data from sensor 1010 that user 1002a has been sitting in chair 1014 for a set number of hours each day, for a certain number of consecutive days or days within a prescribed time period, and processor 1030 receives information from a corporate calendar that the present working day is the last day before a corporate holiday or from a meteorological database that the weather has unexpectedly changed for the better (or worse), the output to user 1002a may encourage him to leave the office earlier than his typical departure time.

[0344] When processor 1030 receives information about local weather, it might also provide user 1002a with an output including a recommendation to take a walk outside the organization's building if data from sensor 1010 indicates he has been sitting for the majority of the afternoon. In some embodiments, organizational user 1002j may provide a group of inputs that include a variety of different rewards or encouragements. Processor 1030 may determine which input to base its output on randomly or according to some other factor, such as user location, user preference, user responsibilities, or user interests.

[0345] Additionally, a particular output may be directed to all members of a group or team. For example, both user 1002a and organizational user 1002j may be included within the same group or team and may receive the same output (as illustrated in FIG. 28, organizational user 1002j's workstation also includes sensor 1010 coupled to table 1016 in his workstation and he may be an active, individual participant in system 1000).

[0346] After processor 1030 generates an output for user 1002a, it transmits the output to user 1002a's watch including display 1004a via system 1000 in a manner similar to those discussed in conjunction with FIG. 24. In addition, system 1000 may detect user 1002a's personal device or devices based on proximity or user 1002a may register his device with system 1000 in accordance with certain embodiments. User 1002a's personal device may display a message based on the output on display 1004a and also may provide an audio message based on the output or convey the output to user 1002a in another known way. Other personal devices

with displays may also receive outputs from processor **1030**, including laptop computers, tablets, mobile phones, glasses, and clothing.

[0347] Once user **1002a** receives an output from processor **1030** via his personal device, he may acknowledge receipt of the message related to the output, which may in turn be conveyed to organizational user **1002j** via processor **1030**.

[0348] In various embodiments, processor **1030** may also generate an output specifically for organizational user **1002j** (an organizational output) and may include various information. For example an organizational output or outputs may include information regarding a user's or users' acknowledgement receipts, the number of outputs sent to users, which users, teams, or groups received outputs, the types of rewards suggested in the outputs, how users reacted to encouragement or motivation, user preferences or interests, user behavior, other information, or any combination of the above. Based on additional data from sensor **1010** collected after a user receives his reward, the organizational output may also include information on whether the user accepted any offered rewards or engaged in any encourage behaviors. For example, the organizational output may include information on whether user **1002a** exited chair **1014** when system **1000** suggested he stand up after a prolonged period of sitting. As discussed in conjunction with FIG. 27, in certain embodiments, the type of data provided in an organizational output may be limited by the nature and potential sensitivity of the information.

[0349] FIG. 29 illustrates a method **1100** of providing information to a user of an article of furniture, similar to systems **600**, **700**, **800**, **900**, and **1000** discussed above. In particular embodiments, method **1100** is directed toward providing encouragement, motivation, coaching, or a reward to a user. Method **1100** begins at step **1110** by sensing a data set about a user. In various embodiments, this sensing occurs through a sensor coupled to an article of furniture, such as a chair or table. Sensors capable of sensing a data set about the user could alternatively or additionally be positioned on a partition, wall, cabinet, shelving, ceiling, windows, doors, flooring, or on or from another surface within the work environment. In some embodiments, multiple sensors within the environment will sense data about a user; some sensors may have different sensing capabilities than others or sensors may be selectively utilized to sense certain characteristics. Sensors may sense changes in temperature, pressure, light, sound, movement, or other characteristics associated with a user's interaction with the work environment. Data sensed by the sensor constitute the data set. In some circumstances, the data set may be limited to a single sensed data point. In other embodiments, the data set includes a number of data points and may include all or some of the measurements taken by the sensor.

[0350] Sending the data set to a processor continues method **1100** in step **1120**. In some embodiments, the processor may be similar to processors described previously in conjunction with FIGS. 23-28. The processor may receive data directly from the sensor or indirectly through an intermediate device such as a gateway. In certain embodiments, the processor may only receive a single data set as described in conjunction with step **1110**. And in some embodiments, the processor may receive multiple data sets from a particular sensor, single data sets from a group of sensors, and/or

multiple data sets from a group of sensors. The processor may aggregate, store, sort, analyze, and otherwise process the data upon receipt.

[0351] Step **1130** includes generating an output based on the data set and an input from an organizational user. In particular embodiments, the processor may solicit an input from the organizational user upon receiving a data set or data sets, at a pre-determined time, or based on some event, such as input from a user. The processor may have received the input from the organizational user at approximately the same time as it received the data set from the sensor or at an earlier or later time. In some embodiments, the organizational user may provide input upon initializing a system like system **1000**, at regular intervals, at irregular intervals, or at any beneficial time. For example, an organizational user may manually or automatically provide input to the processor once a day. In various embodiments, the input provided by the organizational user may depend on additional factors or data sets, including one or more calendars, meteorological information, financial metrics, or group or individual user preferences. Input from the organizational user may provide direction on the type of output appropriate for a group of users, type of user, or individual user. Generated outputs may include a variety of different information, including information designed to motivate, encourage, reward, or otherwise influence the user. For example, the output may be designed to motivate the worker in some way. As described above, worker wellbeing may increase when a worker is able to mindfully engage in his or her work; a related output might encourage the worker to stay focused or to take a break in order to improve focus later. The output may be designed to encourage the worker. Worker wellbeing may increase when a worker knows his or her work is meaningful to the organization; a related output might encourage the worker by providing recognition of his or her effort on a current task. Worker wellbeing may also increase when a worker vitality is encouraged; a related output may reward a worker for prolonged attention (as measured by occupancy in a chair, by stillness in a chair, or by other sensor measurements) over an morning, afternoon, week, month, or other time period by suggesting the user take a break to change postures, to take some time away from the project, or to change his or her routine.

[0352] In some embodiments, the output may be provided for a group or groups of users, but not for a particular user. In these embodiments, the system will generate the output based on at least the data set it receives from the sensor and the input from the organizational user. For example, the sensor may indicate that a user has been sitting in his chair for over two hours and the input may instruct the system to provide an output to users sitting for over two hours where the output encourages the user to change posture and stand up. In other embodiments, the output may be provided for a particular user and in these embodiments the system may generate an output that may also be based on a specific user's preferences, for example a personal enjoyment of a particular beverage like coffee or even a particular coffee drink such as cappuccino. In this example, the sensor may indicate that a user has been sitting in her chair for over two hours. The input associated with the user may instruct the system to provide to users who have been sitting for over two hours and who have input a personal preference regarding a beverage an output regarding a break. As a result, the user may receive an output encouraging the user to take a

break and enjoy a cappuccino. The user may perceive this as encouragement that helps the user stay focused if the user pays for the cappuccino and may perceive it as a reward for the user's efforts if the user receives the beverage complementarily.

[0353] Method 1100 concludes with step 1140 by sending the output to the user. Method 1100 may include a variety of additional or alternative steps. For example, in certain embodiments, the output may be displayed as a message based on the output via an application on a personal device of the user. Personal devices may include laptop computers, tablet computers, wearables, such as glasses, watches, and clothing, or other devices suitable for a work environment. A user's personal device may also convey the output to the user in a way or ways perceptible to the user's other senses, for example, by providing an audio or haptic signal. The method may also include acknowledging receipt of the message or signal and sending the acknowledgment to the processor and/or to the organizational user.

[0354] In particular embodiments, the method may include generating an output for the organizational user (an organizational output) and sending it to the organizational user. The organizational output may or may not be related to the output sent to the user. For example, in some embodiments, the organizational output may include aggregated information about the number of users receiving outputs from the system and/or information about the types of outputs received by the users. In certain embodiments, the organizational output may include information regarding the output sent to a particular user and whether the user took any action in response to the output. The method may also in some embodiments include generating an additional data set about the user through input from the user, where the input relates to the original data set generated by the sensor as described in conjunction with step 1110. Using information input by the user may allow the system to take into account user preferences.

[0355] A related method may include setting up a system to collect information and provide feedback as described in method 1100, for example, by identifying a selected position for a sensor within a work environment that is appropriate to sense a data set about a user of an article of furniture within the work environment; placing the sensor in the selected position; ensuring the sensor is configured to send the data set to a processor; ensuring the processor is configured to receive the data set from the sensor and an input from an organizational user; to generate an output based on the first data set and the input from the organizational user; and to send the output to the user. An additional related method may include creating a system to collect information about and/or provide information to a group of users by providing a plurality or group of furniture in a work environment; providing a plurality or group of sensors that are positioned within the work environment and are configured to sense individual data sets about the group of users of the furniture; and providing a processor configured to receive the individual data sets from the plurality of sensors; to receive an input from an organizational user; to generate a plurality of outputs based on the individual data sets and the input from the organizational user; and to send one or more outputs to one or more users.

[0356] FIG. 30 illustrates a system 1200 for providing information to a user of an article of furniture, similar to systems 600 through 1000 described above. System 1200

provides information to a user or users at a time or within a time range that may improve the user's overall productivity. For example, system 1200 may generate an output for a user that the system holds until a time more appropriate for interruption.

[0357] System 1200 includes user 1202a, displays 1204a and 1204b, sensors 1210, chair 1214, table 1216, gateways 1220, and processor 1230. Any number of users, displays, sensors, furniture, gateways, processors, and other components may be included in various embodiments.

[0358] User 1202a is affiliated with an organization and is associated with chair 1214, table 1216, and displays 1204a and 1204b. In the illustrated embodiment, display 1204a is included in a tablet and display 1204b is included in a mobile telephone. In some embodiments, display 1204a or 1204b may be included in a variety of devices, such as desktop or laptop computers, tablet computers, personal phones, or other wearable devices. Displays 1204a or 1204b may be included in a variety of environmental locations, including walls, partitions, ceilings, windows, floors, desks, chairs, storage furniture, and other furniture. In some embodiments, user 1202a may be associated with one display or may be associated with many displays.

[0359] Chair 1214 and table 1216 are equipped with sensors 1210. Similar to the sensors described previously in conjunction with FIGS. 23 through 29 and other figures above. Sensors 1210 may sense changes in pressure, temperature, movement, and other environmental changes. Sensors 1210 may also be configured to sense changes in a variety of health indicators, including blood pressure, breathing rates, heart rates, blood glucose levels, brain function, and other indicators. In some embodiments, sensors 1210 may sense information correlated to a user's identity, such as a name or an employee number, by sensing the presence of the user's badge or a personal device associated with the user. In embodiments where multiple sensors 1210 sense information correlated to a user's identity, it may be possible to estimate the location of the user through, for example, triangulation.

[0360] Information collected by sensor 1210 may be useful to user 1202a and may include information regarding user 1202a's posture, the length of time user 1202a has been sitting or standing, the likelihood that user 1202a might benefit from a change in location or activity, and/or the current status of various health indicators. As described with respect to sensor 810 and chair 814, in some embodiments chair 1214 may include a greater or fewer number of sensors and these sensors may be positioned anywhere on chair 1214. For example, sensors may be embedded in or coupled to a seat, back, headrest, arms, pedestal, base, or casters.

[0361] As sensors 1210 collect data about user 1202a, sensors 1210 transmit some or all of the data to processor 1230 via gateway 1220. Processor 1230 processes the data it receives from sensors 1210. Processor 1230 may also receive and process additional data from user 1202a or from other sources. Processor 1230 may include several processors depending on the embodiments and these and/or other determinations may be made by the system at various processors.

[0362] In the illustrated embodiment, processor 1230 generates one or more outputs about a user or for the user based on available data. As discussed in conjunction with similar systems 600 through 1000, the generated outputs may include a variety of information and communications. For

example, processor 1230 may determine, based on the data received about user 1202a, that user 1202a should change posture, location, or task. In certain embodiments, data associated with user 1202a may reflect a change in a health indicator, such as a change in breathing rate, and processor 1230 may determine that user 1202a should shift to a different activity. Processor 1230 may configure these determinations about user 1202a as one or more outputs for communication to user 1202a that encourage user 1202a to act in accordance with the suggested change.

[0363] In the illustrated embodiment, processor 1230 additionally determines when to communicate the output to user 1202a. Processor 1230 may rely on a number of factors and data sources in determining a preferred time for communication. As described herein, a preferred time for communication may be a particular time or may be a window or range of time, for example, a several minute range of time before, after, or encompassing a particular time.

[0364] Processor 1230 may determine a preferred time according to affirmative feedback from user 1202a, such as information solicited or received from user 1202a regarding user 1202a's desire to only be interrupted with outputs from system 1200 at certain time intervals or in conjunction with the ending or beginning of various calendar entries. Processor 1230 may determine a preferred time according to historical, sensed feedback from user 1202a, such as data collected over a period of time showing that user 1202a tends to begin shifting more in a chair, possibly indicating a reduction in focus, after a certain length of time; processor 1230 may determine the preferred time for communication in conjunction with the anticipated time that user 1202a's focus and attention to his current task is changing. Processor 1230 may also determine the preferred time according to real-time, sensed feedback from user 1202a, such as data showing that user 1202a was sitting still and has begun to shift and move within a chair, possibly indicating a change in focus; processor 1230 may determine that the preferred time for communication is the time when user 1202a's movement data changes.

[0365] A preferred time for communication in some embodiments may be determined by processor 1230 directly in conjunction with various calendar entries. For example, processor 1230 may receive information that user 1202a is scheduled to attend a meeting at some time in the future; processor 1230 may determine a preferred time for communication is a certain amount of time before the meeting starts, is near the meeting start time, or is near the meeting end time. In addition, processor 1230 may tailor the output in light of various calendar entries. For example, processor 1230 may determine that user 1202a has been sitting for most of the morning and should spend at least some time standing to complete assigned tasks. The output may take calendar entries into account, and may suggest or encourage user 1202a to stand during the meeting or to stand after the meeting.

[0366] In various embodiments, processor 1230 determines a preferred time for communication in accordance with user 1202a's usage of electronic applications. In the illustrated example, user 1202a uses tablet with display 1204a. As user 1202a works on a selected task, user 1202a utilizes a particular application on the tablet. Processor 1230 may determine that a preferred time for communication is when user 1202a switches from the particular application to a second application, which may be correlated with a task

change or may reflect that user 1202a is ready for a break. For example, processor 1230 may determine that user 1202a is working on a particular task based on his selected application, processor 1230 may then determine that user 1202a has completed the task or a portion of the task, because user 1202a is switching from the selected application to a different application, and processor 1230 may then determine that the preferred time for communication is approximately when user 1202a switches from the first to second application. Similarly, processor 1230 may determine that a preferred time for communication is when user 1202a switches between personal devices, for example, switching between an application viewable on tablet display 1204a to an application viewable on mobile display 1204b.

[0367] Processor 1230 sends the output to user 1202a at or near the preferred time for communication. Any number of factors, data sets, and inputs from user 1202a, from user 1202a's environment, or from user 1202a's employer may be used in determining the preferred time for communication. The benefits of waiting to communicate with user 1202a until at or near a preferred communication time include allowing user 1202a to maintain engagement with and/or concentration on a present task.

[0368] In some embodiments, processor 1230 may send some outputs directly to user 1202a without delay. Direct outputs to user 1202a may occur when the output is of a particular nature, for example, a change in a critical health indicator such as blood glucose, or a change exceeding a certain magnitude, such as a change in heart rate exceeding a pre-set limit. In some embodiments, the timing of the output to user 1202a may depend on the magnitude of the associated information. For example, if a change in heart rate is below a certain threshold, processor 1230 may send a related output to user 1202a only at a preferred time, however if the change in heart rate is above a certain threshold, processor 1230 may send the related output to user 1202a without delay. Outputs based on significant changes, such as changes in critical health indicators, may additionally be sent to other users, including users in close physical proximity and/or certain organizational users, such as a user in human resources, security, or in a management role.

[0369] Similar to systems 600, 800, and 1000, described above, outputs received by user 1202a may be displayed on a personal device, including for example on display 1204a on user 1202a's tablet and/or display 1204b on user 1202a's phone. Further similar to system 800, system 1200 may send an output to an organizational user based on the data set associated with user 1202a. In some embodiments, data sets of a group of users including user 1202a may be aggregated or otherwise analyzed by processor 1202a and an output regarding the group may be sent to an organizational user. Information that may be sent to an organizational user may include information about the current location of user 1202a and/or other users of system 1200. Information regarding the length of time user 1202a and/or other users have remained in one location may also or alternately be included. In certain embodiments, additional information may also flow from an organizational user to user 1202a. For example, an organizational user may provide additional outputs for user 1202a that are sent to user 1202a at a preferred time determined by system 1200. This may allow an organization to push information to users without disrupting users at inopportune times.

[0370] Users typically desire to engage fully in their tasks and employers similarly want users to be able to engage mindfully in selected tasks without interruption. System 1200 allows users to receive beneficial information generated for the users that is delivered at an appropriate time or within an appropriate time range, which may improve the distribution of information without reducing productivity.

[0371] FIG. 31 illustrates a method 1300 of providing information to a user of an article of furniture through a system, similar to systems 600 through 1200 discussed above. Method 1300 is directed toward creating a system that can provide information to a user at an appropriate or preferred time. In certain embodiments, the steps disclosed in method 1300 allow the system to prepare information for a user, hold or retain it, and then send it at a preferred time that may not cause an unwanted interruption in the user's work. For example, a user may want information about the location of his team or a reminder to stretch his legs, and he may prefer to receive that information as he switches between tasks, between meetings, or after he's enjoyed a period of time in which he can concentrate on his work. Method 1300 enables a user or users to receive the benefits from participating with the system without sacrificing benefits associated with concentration or from being in the "flow," i.e., in a state where productivity and focus are high.

[0372] Step 1310 begins method 1300 by sensing a data set about a user of an article of furniture. Sensors capable of sensing data about a user may be coupled to a variety of articles in the user's environment, including, for example, chairs, tables, floors, storage cabinets, partitions, walls, displays, ceilings, and floors. Sensors may sense changes in temperature, pressure, light, or sound and may include information on the user's presence, activity level, and/or movement. Sensed data may also include one or more indicators of a user's health or wellbeing, such as temperature, heart rate, blood glucose levels, breathing rate, blood pressure, body mass index, and/or brain activity. Within a user's environment, only one sensor, for example, a sensor coupled to the user's chair, may be sensing information about the user. In other embodiments, multiple sensors may be sensing information about the user; these sensors may each be sensing the same type or types of data or particular sensors may be sensing specific information about the user. Sensors for sensing data about the user may be placed within the user's environment depending on the type of information that a user or organization hopes to sense. For example, a sensor coupled to a user's chair may sense information about the user's movement within the chair, from which information on a status of or a change in the user's concentration may be derived. In some embodiments, a sensor positioned in the environment, for example, coupled to a partition or wall, may be able to sense information about a user's presence within the environment, even if he isn't in physical contact with any of the furniture or articles in the environment, while. Various sensors may sense information on a user's identity. Data sensed by the sensor constitute a data set and may include one or more data points.

[0373] Method 1300 continues with step 1320 by sending the data set to a processor. The processor may be similar to processors described previously in conjunction with FIGS. 23-30. Although referenced in the singular herein, a processor may comprise several processors that may be located together or remotely from one or more other processors and/or components of the system. Data sent to and received

by the processor may be received directly from a sensor or may be received through one or more intermediaries, including for example a gateway, similar to gateway 1220. The processor may receive data from a single sensor, multiple sensors associated with a particular user, or multiple sensors associated with multiple users. The processor may also receive other data about users of the system. The processor may aggregate, store, sort, analyze, and otherwise process some or all of the data upon receipt.

[0374] Step 1330 includes generating an output based on the data set. Similar to steps 930 and 1130 described in conjunction with methods 900 and 1100, respectively, the processor generates an output based on some or all of the data received. As noted in conjunction with step 1320, in certain embodiments, the processor may access additional sources of information contained within the system and the output may be based on the data set and additional data sources. For example, the processor may receive information from a sensor associated with a user and a sensor tracking ambient noise levels in a space associated with the user. The processor may analyze the data and determine that the user moves in his chair around the same time that an audible interruption occurs, which may indicate that the audio interruption is reducing the user's ability to focus on his current task. The processor may have access to additional information including current task information from the user and scheduling information for nearby environmental resources, such as shared workstations or conference rooms. The processor may generate an output for the user, suggesting that he move to a workstation that is not subject to audible interruptions. Other exemplary outputs may include encouragement for a user to change posture after receiving sensed data indicating the user has been in a similar position for a period of time; a suggestion for an available work environment; communication including motivation, encouragement, or rewards; communication regarding the status of one or more health indicators; information regarding a user's schedule or upcoming calendar commitments; task-specific information; communication about the proximity of another worker or workers; and/or environmental information, such as ambient noise, light, and temperature information.

[0375] Step 1340 continues method 1300 by determining a preferred time for communication with the user. The preferred time for communication may be determined in various ways and may be a particular preferred time or a preferred range of time. For example, the preferred time for communication may be determined in conjunction with feedback from the user regarding the user's preferred time and manner of communication. In certain embodiments, the system may solicit feedback directly from the user via an application on a personal device. For example, the system may inquire what type of feedback the user prefers, how often the user takes breaks to optimize output, what types of working environments are most conducive to productive work generally or for specific tasks, and/or other inquiries related to the user's preferred environment to improve productivity. In some embodiments, the system may exclusively rely on affirmative responses to determine a preferred time. It may also rely partially or fully on sensed data about the user. For example, the system may determine a preferred time for communication by sensing and correlating information about when a user choose to act or not act on suggestions contained in the system's outputs with the times at which the user received these outputs.

[0376] In various embodiments, a preferred time may be set and not variable; for example, it may be related to a particular time interval or particular time of day. A preferred time for communication may also be dynamic and depend on one or more factors. As noted previously, the system processor may receive or have access to other sources of information about a user and/or environment and this information may impact the determination of a preferred time. For example, processor may access information about a user's current task and may determine that a preferred time for communication is immediate (e.g., if the task is not time sensitive) or is in the future (e.g., at the completion of the task or if the task is time sensitive and/or is incomplete). In particular embodiments, the processor may access information about a user's device usage or devices associated with the user. For example, the processor may access information about devices associated with a user and may determine that the preferred time for communication is approximately the time when the user switches from one device to another (e.g., when a user stops working on a computer or tablet and checks a message on a phone). The processor may alternately or additionally access information about application usage on a user's device and may determine that a preferred time for communication is approximately the time when a user switches from one application to another (e.g., when the user switches from a document creation application to an email application) or between views in an application (e.g., when the user switches from one browser tab to another). The processor may also access, in certain embodiments, information associated with a user's calendaring or scheduling application and may determine that a preferred time for communication is at a time that corresponds approximately to an entry in the calendaring application (e.g., just before a user would stop or interrupt a task to attend a video conference or in-person discussion).

[0377] In some embodiments, the processor may determine that a preferred time for communication is when the user begins to lose focus on a current task. The processor will then continuously or regularly analyze the sensed data it receives regarding the user. When the processor determines from the sensed data that the user may be losing focus, the preferred time for communication will have arrived. This may occur, for example, when the sensed data shows that the user is working on a task and sitting relatively still in a chair, and then, while continuing to complete the task, the user increasingly begins to shift in the chair. A preferred time for communication or way the processor determines a preferred time for communication may also be established by someone other than the impacted user, including for example, by an organizational user. For example, in some embodiments, windows of time for communication may be set by an organizational user and the system may rely on sensed data of a user to determine a preferred time for communication with the user within the window set by the organizational user.

[0378] Method **1300** concludes with step **1350** by sending the output to the user at approximately the preferred time for communication. By sending the output to the user at the preferred time for communication, a user may benefit from the information conveyed by the system without incurring an additional interruption. By controlling the timing of any communications, workers may be more interested and/or willing to become users of the system. Unmanaged interruptions may reduce work productivity. Consequently, man-

aging the timing of interruptions, by determining a preferred time for communication, may allow one or more users to engage more productively in work and may avoid or reduce the decrease in productivity often attributed to workplace interruptions.

[0379] Method **1300** may include several additional or alternative steps. For example, outputs may be displayed to a user via an application on a device associated with the user. The application may be an application specific to the system or an application used for other functions, such as a web browser. In some embodiments, an output may be sent to one or more users, for example, multiple users may be notified that their teammates are located in a given area. An output may also be sent to an organizational user; this output, similar to the organizational outputs described previously, may include information about a user or group of users. Additional variations on method **1300** or related methods may include a method for setting up a system to collect information about one or more furniture users by identifying or selecting a position within a work environment that is appropriate to sense a data set about a user of an article of furniture within the work environment, placing a sensor in the selected position, and ensuring the sensor can send the data set to a processor, where the processor is configured to generate an output based on the data set, determine a preferred time range for communication with the user, and send the output to the user during the preferred time range for communication. In some embodiments of this related method, the sensor may be coupled to the article of furniture, such as a chair. Another related method may include creating a system for collecting information about a plurality of users in a particular environment, such as a work or office environment, and may include providing a plurality of articles of furniture in a work environment, providing a plurality of sensors positioned within the work environment that are configured to sense individual data sets about a plurality of users of the articles of furniture, and providing a processor configured to receive the individual data sets from the plurality of sensors, determine a preferred time range for communication with one or more users of the plurality of users, and send the one or more outputs to the one or more users during the preferred time range for communication. Similarly, in this related method, each of the sensors may be coupled to one of the plurality of articles of furniture, which may be a grouping of chairs.

[0380] FIG. **32** illustrates system **1400** for providing information to a user of an article of furniture, similar to systems described above in conjunction with FIGS. **23** through **31**. System **1400** provides information that may help users better collaborate with the users' colleagues. For example, in certain embodiments, system **1400** may sense that two users are working on similar tasks and may send information to one or both users about a space they could use to work together.

[0381] System **1400** includes users **1402a**, **1402c**, and **1402j**, displays **1404a**, **1404c**, and **1404j**, sensors **1410**, chairs **1414a**, **1414b**, **1414c**, **1414d**, **1414e**, and **1414j**, tables **1416a**, **1416b**, **1416c** and **1416j**, gateway **1420**, and processor **1430**. Any number of users, displays, sensors, furniture, gateways, processors, and other components may be included in various embodiments.

[0382] Users **1402a** and **1402c** are affiliated with an organization and may have a variety of responsibilities. They may be assigned to work on the same team for all or some

tasks, or may have no overlapping or coordinating activities. Users **1402a** and **1402c** may or may not know each other. User **1402j** is also affiliated with the organization and has organizational responsibilities. Although user **1402j** is illustrated here as one person, in various embodiments, organizational user **1402j** may include any suitable number of people or computers with organizational responsibilities.

[0383] In the illustrated embodiment, user **1402a** is working at a work station that includes chair **1414a** and **1416a**. A nearby workstation includes chair **1414b** and table **1416b**. User **1402c** is working at a work station that includes chair **1414c** and table **1416c**. User **1402j** is working at a work station that includes chair **1414j** and table **1416j**. Chairs **1414d** and **1414e** are located near each other and remote from the work stations described above.

[0384] Each of the chairs **1414** and tables **1416** are equipped with sensors **1410**. In the illustrated embodiment, sensors **1410** are configured to collect data or sense information about users **1404**. Sensors **1410** coupled to chair **1414a** and table **1416a** collect data about user **1404a**; sensors **1410** coupled to chair **1414c** and table **1416c** collect data about user **1404c**; and sensors **1410** coupled to chair **1414j** and table **1416j** collect data about user **1404j**. Sensors coupled to chairs **1414b**, **1414d**, **1414e** and tables **1416b**, **1416d**, **1416e** may collect information as well, which may primarily consist of information about the lack of any user activity. Similar to the sensors described previously in conjunction with FIGS. 23-31, sensors **1410** may sense changes in pressure, temperature, movement, and health indicators. Information collected by sensors **1410** may be correlated to a user's presence near one or more sensors **1410**, a user's posture, a user's focus or mental engagement, and/or a user's health and wellbeing. Additional sensors may be present in the described work environments in a variety of locations.

[0385] Sensors **1410** are configured to transmit some or all of the sensed data to processor **1430** via gateway **1420**. Processor **1430** processes the data it receives from sensors **1410**. Processor **1430** also has access to information regarding the organization, which it receives in sum or in part from organizational user **1402j**. Information regarding the organization may include information about users, such as users **1402a**'s and **1402c**'s assigned tasks, colleague identities, team member identities, or supervisor identities, as well as information about environmental resources, such as meeting rooms, project rooms, project resources, prototyping resources, videoconferencing resources, and nourishment locations. Processor **1430** may also receive or have access to additional information related to users **1402**, including for example, current application usage on any personal devices, calendars, email patterns and traffic, and personal preferences.

[0386] In the illustrated embodiment, processor **1430** generates an output or outputs based on the data it receives, including data about users **1402a** and **1402c** from sensors **1410** and data regarding the organization from organization user **1402j**. Outputs include information about another user's location or activity, information about environmental locations conducive to collaboration, independent work, or down-time, and/or information about productive changes in upcoming calendar events or additional calendar events. A variety of outputs are available based on the sensed data received by processor **1430**.

[0387] In certain embodiments, after receiving sensed data about users **1402a** and **1402c** regarding their respective and separate locations and receiving information from organizational user **1402j** that users **1402a** and **1402c** are working together on a project, processor **1430** may generate an output with location information about one or both users. For example, the output may direct user **1402a** that a colleague, such as user **1402c**, is working in a nearby location, identify the location, and/or provide directions or travel time to the location. In particular embodiments, processor **1430** may generate an output with varied location information about multiple colleagues or multiple teams.

[0388] Processor **1430** may additionally or alternatively receive information about the present tasks of users **1402a** and **1402c**. Processor **1430** may generate an output for user **1402a** regarding the activity of user **1402c**. For example, an output generated for user **1402a** may include information that user **1402c** is working on a similar task, is working on a task that is on user **1402a**'s agenda but has not yet been started, or is completing a task for which both users **1402a** and **1402c** share responsibility. Processor **1430** may also generate an output for user **1402a** with information about the location of a group of users who have been assigned the same or similar task and the current status of the group members' work.

[0389] In some embodiments, generated outputs may include task and location information. For example, the output may include information for user **1402a** that a colleague, such as **1402c**, is working on a similar task at a nearby location and may identify the location. These outputs may allow users of system **1400** to better collaborate with teammates, especially when teammates are mobile workers or are working in distributed locations. Similar outputs regarding task and location may allow users more accurately to find assistance for a given task. For example, organizational user **1402j** may provide information to processor **1430** regarding the experiences or expertise of a given group of users. Processor **1430** may then generate an output for user **1402a** with information about the location of a system user who has had previous experience in a type of task, should user **1402a** need assistance.

[0390] In certain embodiments, processor **1430** may generate an output with location information for a user or group of users regarding a location for collaboration. For example, processor **1430** may receive sensed data indicating that user **1402a** and user **1402c** are present but in separate locations. Processor **1430** may also receive sensed data indicating that chairs **1414b**, **1414d** and **1414e** are vacant and available. Based on this sensed data and an input from organizational user **1402j**, processor may generate an output that suggests that user **1402c** move closer to user **1402a** by occupying chair **1414b**, or that users **1402a** and **1402c** may be able to collaborate or work together at chairs **1414d** and **1414e**. Processor may rely on other information, including for example, ambient noise, task, distance from each user, user preferences, and/or other factors, to determine which option to suggest. The outputs may include the locations of chair **1414b** or chairs **1414d** and **1414e**, respectively. In various embodiments, a suggested location for collaboration may include certain chairs, tables, lounge spaces, nourishment spaces, meeting spaces, spaces with videoconferencing capabilities, confidential spaces, or development spaces, and may depend on a variety of factors, including the number of

participating users, the tasks of the users, the identity of the users, and the present location of the users.

[0391] Processor **1430** sends one or more of the generated outputs to one or more users of system **1400**. In several of the examples described above, processor **1430** sends the output to at least user **1402a**. Outputs may also be sent to user **1402c**, organizational user **1402j**, and other users or groups of users. Outputs sent to a user or users may be displayed on a personal device of the user, including for example, a mobile phone, a tablet, a laptop computer, or other display affiliated with the user. The output or a communication based on the output may be displayed on the personal device of a user via an application related to or developed for system **1400** or via an application that may be used for many purposes, such as a web browser.

[0392] Benefits of system **1400** may include the ability of individual users to identify and/or locate team members more efficiently, which may allow a mobile workforce to collaborate more easily. In some embodiments, additional benefits of system **1400** may include increased productivity for users, for example, in situations where a user needs help completing a task and receives information on the location of a user who can provide assistance.

[0393] FIG. **33** illustrates a method **1500** of providing information to a user of an article of furniture through a system, similar to systems **600** through **1400** discussed above. Method **1500** is directed toward generating and sharing providing information on the locations and activities of system users in order to foster collaboration. Method **1500** allows a user to receive information regarding the location and activities of his colleagues. Method **1500** may be particularly helpful in work environments where some or all workers are mobile or are not assigned a particular workstation for day-to-day tasks. Information on the location and/or activities of other users, may allow a user to find or contact others on his team for collaboration. Method **1500** may also be helpful in work environments where multiple users, who would benefit from working together to complete a task, select or are assigned to remote workstations. By receiving information about the location and/or activity of other users, a user can make an informed decision as to whether moving to another location might help accomplish a given task.

[0394] Method **1500** starts with step **1510** by sensing a first data set about a first user and proceeds to step **1520** by sensing a second data set about a second user. Steps **1510** and **1520** occur via one or more sensors present in the work environments of the first and second users. A sensor configured to sense a first data set or a second data set may be coupled to or embedded in an article of furniture, such as a chair, desk, lounge furniture, or storage furniture, or to or in structural elements within the environment, such as partitions, walls, ceilings, or flooring elements. Each data set may include one or more pieces of data. In some embodiments, a data set will include all data points sensed or collected by one or more sensors or may include only some of the data points sensed by one or more sensors.

[0395] Method **1500** continues by sending the first and second data sets to a processor. The sensors described in conjunction with steps **1510** and **1520** will transmit data to a processor. Sensors may send data continuously, sporadically, at regularly timed intervals, or whenever data is generated. One sensor with the system may send data at different times than some or all other sensors within the

system. In particular embodiments, sensors will receive a notification prompting the transfer of some or all sensed data. The processor may be a single processor or a collection of processors, which may be physically located near or remotely from one or more work environments including sensors. Some or all sensors may, in certain embodiments, transmit data to the processor through an intermediary device, such as a gateway. In addition to the first and second data sets, the processor may have access to or may receive additional data. For example, the processor may receive information about some or all users of the system, including information on user roles within the organizational structure; user positions, tasks, and activities; calendaring information; and information about the personal devices of users. This additional information may, in some embodiments, be received directly or indirectly from a user within the system who has responsibilities for managing the organization, often described herein as an organization user.

[0396] In embodiments where one or more sensors are positioned within a space assigned to an individual user, any data collected by the sensor or sensors may be attributed by the processor to the individual user based on the sensor identity. In embodiments where sensors are positioned within a space that accommodates mobile users or a group of users, the processor may not be able to assign data automatically to a certain user or users. In these embodiments, the processor may utilize an alternative correlation between sensed data with a particular user in order to provide feedback to that user. For example, one or more sensors within the system may be able to sense and collect data about an aspect of the user's activity (e.g., the user's movement) and collect data about the user's identity. Sensors may be able to collect information about the user's identity by sensing and identifying a user's badge or personal electronic device such as a phone, wearable, tablet, or laptop. Approximate user location may be determined by identifying the location of one or more sensors that are collecting data about a user. Multiple sensors may be able to triangulate a user's location. Sensors may transmit user identification data separately or with other data and identification data may be a part of the first and/or second data sets disclosed in steps **1510** and **1520**.

[0397] Step **1540** continues method **1500** by generating an output based on the first and second data sets and an input from the organizational user. As described above in conjunction with step **1530**, processor may access additional information about a user or an environment. This additional information may be accessible in whole or in part via one or more inputs from an organizational user. For example, a user with some responsibilities for running an organization may provide information to the system regarding tasks and teams of various users. The processor is then able to use the sensed data collected in steps **1510** and **1520** and the organizational input to generate an output. The output may include information about a user's tasks, teammates, or current or suggested work environment.

[0398] For example, the processor may receive sensor information indicating that two users of the system are present within a given proximity of each other. The processor may also receive or have received information from an organizational user that the two users are both tasked with working on a project. Upon receiving information about the users, the processor may generate an output for one user that includes information on the location of the other user. This

may allow one user to seek out the other user for assistance or to collaborate in person. Alternately, in embodiments where the users may or may not be present within a given proximity of each other, the processor may generate an output for one or both users that includes information on their respective locations and information on a possible physical meeting location or on a method to meet and discuss electronically, for example, information on a video conferencing site for one or both users.

[0399] After receiving the information described above, the processor may generate additional or alternate outputs. Examples include an output with information on the location of a manager or supervisor, information on the progress of a colleague or teammate on a task, or information on available work environments.

[0400] Method 1500 concludes at step 1550 by sending the output to the first user. In various embodiments, method 1500 will include different or additional steps. For example, in some embodiments, sending the output to the first user will include displaying the output via an application on a personal device of the user. An output that is the same, similar, or different may be sent to one or more other users, including an organizational user, groups of users, or all users. A variation on method 1500 may create a system to provide similar information to users by identifying a plurality of positions within a work environment appropriate for sensing, placing a first sensor in a first position of the plurality of positions, where the first position is appropriate to sense a first data set about a first user of a first article of furniture; placing a second sensor in a second position of the plurality of positions, where the second position is appropriate to sense a second data set about a second user of a second article of furniture; and ensuring the first and second sensors are configured to send the first and second data sets to a processor, where the processor is configured to generate an output based on the first and second data sets and an input from an organizational user and to send the output to the first user. Another variation on method 1500 may include creating a system for collecting information about a group of users by providing a plurality of articles of furniture in a work environment, providing a plurality of sensors in the work environment that are configured to sense individual data sets about a plurality of users of an article of furniture; and providing a processor configured to receive the individual data sets from the plurality of sensors, to generate one or more outputs based on the data sets and one or more inputs from an organizational user, and to send the one or more outputs to the one or more users. In some embodiments, one or more of the sensors may be coupled to the articles of furniture, which may often be office chairs.

[0401] The technical benefits of these method steps may include allowing a group of users to connect more efficiently with colleagues, teammates, and mentors. Several of these steps may allow a distributed team or mobile work force to collaborate more easily, which may increase productivity and user satisfaction.

[0402] Referring again to FIG. 7 and also now to FIG. 34, an exemplary chair assembly 10 can provide heat to a seated user in locations that are selected based on user comfort or the best available medical knowledge for treatment of various muscle and joint conditions. For example, the chair assembly 10 can provide heat to a seated user in the lumbar region of the back, by a continuous heating element located in the lower part of the back assembly 18, by a series of

heating elements located in the lower part of the back assembly 18, or by one or more heating elements located where the best available medical advice indicates that lower back heat treatment is most effective.

[0403] The chair assembly 10 can also provide heat to a seated user in an effort to promote better posture based on the best available scientific evidence for the manipulation of seating habits by the application of heat. Different combinations of heating elements are contemplated and, for each combination, different ways of controlling heat in each of the elements are contemplated. For example, heat can be applied at the very bottom of the backrest in an effort to coax a user into shifting her buttocks backward to engage the backrest. Heat could also be applied at the front of the seat cushion, in an effort to coax a user into avoiding a “perched” seating position where the thighs are not supported.

[0404] Referring still to FIG. 34, the chair assembly 10 can include heating elements in the back assembly 18. The chair assembly 10 can include a two-point heating element arrangement in the back assembly 18, with a central lower element 1602 located at the bottom of the back assembly 18 for applying heat to the lumbar region of the back, and a central middle element 1608 located in the middle of the back assembly 18 for applying heat to a central portion of a user’s thoracic region of the back.

[0405] The chair assembly 10 can include a three-point heating element arrangement in the back assembly 18, with the central lower element 1602 deployed and utilized in the same fashion as the two-point heating element arrangement, and two upper flanking elements 1604 located at the top right and top left of the back assembly 18 for applying heat to a user’s shoulders.

[0406] Alternatively, the chair assembly 10 can include a four-point heating element arrangement in the back assembly 18, with two lower flanking elements 1606 located at the bottom left and bottom right of the back assembly 18 for heating a user’s lumbar region of the back, and two upper flanking elements 1604 deployed and utilized in the same fashion as the three-point heating element arrangement.

[0407] Alternatively, the chair assembly 10 can include a five-point heating element arrangement in the back assembly 18, with two lower flanking elements 1606 and two upper flanking elements 1604 deployed and utilized in the same fashion as the four-point heating element arrangement, and the central middle element 1608 deployed and utilized in the same fashion as the two-point heating element arrangement. A different five-point heating element arrangement in the back assembly 18 can include a central lower element 1602 and two upper flanking elements 1604 deployed and utilized in the same fashion as the three-point heating element arrangement, a central middle element 1608 deployed and utilized in the same fashion as the five point heating element arrangement, and a central upper element 1610 located at the top middle of the back assembly 18 for applying heat to a central portion of the user’s upper middle back or cervical region of the back.

[0408] Alternatively, the chair assembly 10 can utilize a six-point heating element arrangement in the back assembly 18, with two lower flanking elements 1606 and two upper flanking elements 1604 deployed and utilized in the same fashion as the four-point heating element arrangement, and two middle flanking elements 1612 located in the middle left and middle right of the back assembly 18 for heating a user’s thoracic region of the back on the left and right side.

[0409] Alternatively, the chair assembly 10 can utilize a seven-point heating element arrangement in the back assembly 18, with two lower flanking elements 1606, two middle flanking elements 1612, two upper flanking elements 1604, and the central upper element 1610.

[0410] The chair assembly can include any of the heating elements described herein as a one-point heating element arrangement in the back assembly 18. Other two-point heating element arrangements include any two flanking elements or any two central elements. Other three-point heating element arrangements in the back assembly 18 include the following: a central lower element 1602, a central middle element 1608, and a central upper element 1610; two flanking lower elements 1607 and a central middle element 1608 or a central upper element 1610; two flanking middle elements 1612 and a central lower element 1602 or a central upper element 1610; and two flanking upper elements 1604 and a central middle element 1608. Other four-point heating element arrangements in the back assembly 18 include the following: any combination of two flanking elements with two different flanking elements; or any combination of two flanking elements with two central elements. Other five-point heating element arrangements in the back assembly 18 include the following: any combination of two flanking elements with two different flanking elements, and one central element; or any combination of two flanking elements with three central elements. Other six-point heating element arrangements in the back assembly 18 include the following: any combination of two flanking elements with two different flanking elements, and two central elements.

[0411] Referring to FIGS. 34 and 35, the chair assembly 10 can include heating elements in the seat assembly 16. The chair assembly 10 can include a two-point heating element arrangement in the seat assembly 16, with two rear elements 1616 located at the back of the seat assembly 16 for applying heat to a user's buttocks, two middle elements 1618 located in the middle of the seat assembly 16 for applying heat to a user's upper thighs, two front elements 1620 located at the front of the seat assembly, for applying heat to a user's lower thighs, or two forward-facing elements 1622 located on a front-facing portion of the seat assembly 16 for applying heat to the back of a user's knees or to a user's upper calves.

[0412] The chair assembly 10 can include a three-point heating element arrangement in the seat assembly 16, with a single rear element 1626 for applying heat to a user's buttocks and the two middle elements 1618, the two front elements 1620, or the two forward-facing elements 1622.

[0413] The chair assembly 10 can include a four-point, six point, or eight-point heating element arrangement in the seat assembly 16, with any combination of the two rear elements 1616, the two middle elements 1618, the two front elements 1620, and the two forward-facing elements 1622.

[0414] The chair assembly 10 can include a five-point or seven-point heating element arrangement in the seat assembly 16, with the single rear element 1626 and any combination of the two middle elements 1618, the two front elements 1620, and the two forward-facing elements 1622. The chair assembly 10 can include a one-point heating element arrangement in the seat assembly 16 with any heating element described herein.

[0415] Referring to FIG. 35, the chair assembly 10 can include heating elements in the arm assemblies 20. The chair assembly 10 can include a one-point heating element

arrangement in each arm assembly 20, with a full length heating element 1628 for heating a user's elbows, forearms, and wrists, a rear heating element 1630 for heating a user's elbows, or a front heating element 1632 for heating a user's forearms and/or wrists. The chair assembly 10 can include a two-point heating element arrangement in each arm assembly 20, with the rear heating element 1630 and the front heating element 1632.

[0416] Referring to FIG. 34, the chair assembly 10 can utilize a heat application mapping module 1614 in the back assembly 18, such as a smart fabric that can selectively apply heat to any of the locations described herein with respect to the back assembly 18. Referring to FIGS. 34 and 35, the chair assembly 10 can utilize a heat application mapping module 1624 in the seat assembly 16, such as a smart fabric that can selectively apply heat to any of the locations described herein with respect to the seat assembly 16. Referring to FIG. 35, the chair assembly 10 can utilize a heat application mapping module 1634 in the arm assemblies 20, such as a smart fabric that can selectively apply heat to any of the locations desired herein with respect to the arm assemblies 20.

[0417] The chair assembly 10 can include any combination of the heating element arrangements for the back assembly 18, the seat assembly 16, and the arm assemblies 20. In some aspects, the chair assembly can include all or some of the heating elements described herein and a user must activate the heating elements in a commissioning process.

[0418] The heating elements shown in FIGS. 34 and 35 are of an exemplary size and shape and can be bigger, smaller, or shaped differently than pictured. The heating elements shown in FIGS. 34 and 35 are positioned in exemplary locations and in certain aspects, the positions are customizable to a particular user. For example, the upper elements 1604 can be positioned higher for a person with a longer torso or lower for a person with a shorter torso.

[0419] The heating elements can be manually repositioned by a user in at least some embodiments. For example, the back assembly 18 could contain a plurality of foam inserts in various locations where a user might desire a heating element, and the user could replace the foam insert with a heating element in a location that is customized to the user's physical dimensions. Alternatively, the heating elements may be repositioned by a motor mechanism, which can move in response to a specific user command or in automatic response to a user's physical dimensions, which can be programmed or sensed by the chair assembly. In the event the best available medical knowledge changes, the heating elements described herein may be deployed in a variety of additional locations, so as to be suitable for applying heat to a user according to the best available medical knowledge.

[0420] Control of the heating elements may be dynamic in at least some embodiments. To this end, for instance, one or more heating elements may be cycled through different temperatures where the changing temperature is intended to help maintain a chair user's alertness. The cycling may only be controlled for one or a subset of chair heating elements while others are maintained at a constant or steady state temperature. In some cases the heating element temperature or cycling pattern may be adjusted as a function of sensed parameters within the chair seat and/or backrest structure. For instance, where pressure is substantial at one seat location, heat may be applied at a different seat location or

at several other seat locations to encourage the employee to shift her weight to what is perceived to be a more healthy position. As another instance, the heat may be cycled on and off at different locations to encourage user movement in cases where that type of activity is perceived to be advantageous. Here, for instance, some employees may shift to avoid applied heat while others shift to encounter applied heat.

[0421] The heating elements can be repositioned by a motor mechanism, which can move in response to a specific user command or in automatic response to a user's physical dimensions, which can be programmed or sensed by the chair assembly **10** in at least some embodiments. In the event the best available scientific knowledge relating to seated posture and health changes, the pressure sensors described herein can be deployed in a variety of additional locations, so as to be suitable for sensing pressure for posture determinations according to the best available scientific knowledge.

[0422] In some aspects, the pressure sensors can be used to ensure that there is no or at least minimal pressure in certain locations. For example, referring again to FIG. **36**, the seat assembly can include the two front pressure sensors **1658** for sensing if a user's calves are engaged with the front of the seat assembly. According to the currently best available scientific knowledge, the best posture requires space between a user's calves and the front of the seat assembly.

[0423] In some aspects, referring to FIGS. **36** and **37**, the pressure sensors may be point pressure sensors **1671** that measure essentially a single point of pressure. The point pressure sensors **1671** can be located at positions scientifically determined to be ideal for identifying postures with the minimal number of sensors possible, as shown in FIGS. **36** and **37**.

[0424] Although there is a general concept of ideal posture according to the best available scientific knowledge, it is generally not ideal for a user to occupy any single posture position for too long, even if it is an ideal posture position. Accordingly, the chair assembly might utilize the pressure sensors to monitor a user's posture to account for the cycling of postures. For example, if it is generally known that there is one ideal posture, and four nearly-ideal postures that are close to ideal but not quite ideal, the chair assembly can monitor pressure sensors or points on a pressure map associated with the one ideal posture and the four nearly-ideal postures when the user initially sits. Then, after sensing that the user is occupying one of these postures and has not moved for a certain length of time, the chair assembly can monitor the pressure sensors or points on a pressure map associated with the other postures that the user is not occupying, in order to prompt the user to occupy one of the other postures, in order to actuate a portion of the chair in order to physically alter the user's posture to conform with one of the other postures, or simply to determine if and when the user moves to one of the other postures.

[0425] If the chair assembly senses that a user has occupied a particular posture for a certain period of time, for example, 30 minutes or a length of time considered by the best available medical knowledge to be the longest time a person should occupy one position, then the chair assembly can prompt a user to change postures. The prompt can take the form of a visual or audio cue, a vibration, or an actuation of a part of the chair assembly **10** in an attempt to force the user to occupy a different posture.

[0426] In some aspects, the chair assembly **10** can assess posture immediately by taking a "snap shot" of a user's posture. For example, the processor can assess the posture of a user using the snap shot described above, and if the user is sitting with bad posture in the snap shot, then the processor can make a recommendation for an adjustment of posture to the user or can actuate a part of the chair assembly **10** to prompt an adjustment of the user's posture. In some aspects, the chair assembly **10** can assess posture hysteretically by averaging the posture of a user over time. For example, the processor can assess a user's average posture over the course of five minutes, or any other pre-programmed length of time, and if the user's average posture is bad, then the processor can make a recommendation for an adjustment of posture to the user or can actuate a part of the chair assembly **10** to prompt an adjustment of the user's posture.

[0427] As the chair assembly attempts to improve a user's posture either by prompting the user to adopt a better posture or by mechanically moving the chair to guide the user's body into a better posture, the improvement can be made slowly over time. For example, the chair assembly **10** may only prompt the user when the user is in a posture that is perceived to be below a certain posture quality level. As another example, the chair assembly **10** may only prompt the user a small number of times per day at first, and then slowly increase the number of times the chair assembly **10** will prompt the user, and eventually, the chair assembly **10** can prompt the user any time the user is not using good posture. As a further example, the chair assembly **10** can slowly adjust the physical position of the chair, the application of heat or vibrations to certain locations of the chair, or a combination thereof in order to adjust the user's posture. This adjustment can be slow enough that it is not easily perceived by the user.

[0428] In some aspects, a single component can serve as both a heating element and a pressure sensor, thus allowing application of heat and sensing pressure simultaneously at a single location.

[0429] Temperature sensors can measure the temperature of the user, the temperature of a portion of the chair assembly **10** contacted by the user, or an ambient temperature of the environment surrounding the chair assembly **10** and the user. In embodiments where temperature sensors are configured to measure the temperature of the user, they can be located at the same positions as set forth above with respect to the pressure sensors, as shown in FIGS. **36** and **37**. In embodiments where a temperature sensor is configured to measure the ambient temperature, the temperature sensor **1682** can be located in a location that the user does not come into contact with, such as on an underside of support assembly **19**, as shown in FIG. **39**.

[0430] As described herein, the chair assembly **10** can include a heart rate sensor. Many of the locations where a pulse can be sensed on a user are inaccessible by a chair supporting a seated user, but some can be accessed by heart rate sensors located in the chair assembly **10**. Two different pulses can be sensed in the wrist area, namely, the radial pulse and the ulnar pulse. Referring to FIG. **38**, a wrist heart rate sensor **1672** positioned at the front edge of the top surface **55** of one or both of the armrests **53** could measure a heart rate when a user is utilizing the armrests. Another pulse can be sensed in the legs, namely, the popliteal pulse, which can be sensed behind the knee. Referring to FIG. **38**,

a single knee heart rate sensor **1674** positioned at the front edge of the seat assembly **16** or two separate knee heart rate sensors **1676** positioned at the front edge of a seat assembly **16** where a user's legs are expected to fall could measure a heart rate when a user is sitting appropriately far back in the chair.

[0431] As described herein, the chair assembly **10** can include a breath rate sensor. Referring to FIG. **39**, the chair assembly **10** can include breath rate sensors **1678** at positions within the back assembly **18** that are proximate the lung cavity of a seated user.

[0432] As described herein, the chair assembly **10** can include a galvanic skin response sensor. Because most of the contact points between a user and the back assembly **18** or seat assembly **16** are clothed, the galvanic skin response sensor is preferably located on the top surface **55** of the armrest **53**. For example, referring to FIG. **38**, the galvanic skin response sensor **1680** can be located in the middle of the top surface **55** of the armrest **53**, though other locations on the top surface of the arm assembly **20** are contemplated.

[0433] "Flow" is a concept that relates to a mental and physical state where a user is performing in an optimal fashion. Developments have enabled the sensing and detection of a user's flow state. The chair assembly can utilize one or more of the sensors described herein, an on-board processor, and the best scientifically-available techniques for sensing flow, to determine if a user occupying a chair is in a flow state, out of a flow state, entering a flow state, or exiting a flow state. The chair assembly can utilize a visual indicator on the chair assembly, such as one or more LEDs that illuminate in colors representative of an instantaneous or steady state flow state, an optical indicator that projects a certain ambient light about the chair representative of the flow state, a smart material on the chair that changes colors to indicate flow state, etc.

[0434] The chair assembly can communicate with other chair assemblies, via a wireless transmitter, and can share data relating to a user's flow state. The visual indicator can then be representative of a user's current flow state relative to other user's, a user's average flow state relative to other user's, the total amount of time a user is in a flow state compared with other users, and the like.

[0435] If a processor makes a determination that a user is in a flow state, is being productive, is actively collaborating, or any other determination of a generally positive user state, and at the same time the processor determines that one or more prompts need to be delivered to the user, such as a prompt regarding recharging the chair assembly or a prompt to recommission the chair assembly, or the processor determines that the posture of the user should be adjusted by actuating one or more portions of the chair assembly, then the processor can delay the prompt or the posture adjustment until the user is no longer in the generally positive state. For example, if a user is in a flow state and the chair requires recharging, the processor might wait until the user is no longer in the flow state to notify the user or the processor might wait until the chair is at a critically low charge state to notify the user. Similarly, if a processor determines that a user is being very productive, but that their posture is not ideal to the point that the processor would like to actuate the chair assembly to adjust the user's posture, then the processor can wait until the user is no longer being very productive to adjust the user's posture. These settings can be adjusted based on user. For instance, a user can configure the pro-

cessor to never interrupt a flow state, regardless of the charge state of the chair or posture of the user. A user can also program which sensed or deduces states can or cannot be interrupted. For example, a user could configure the processor to not prompt the user or adjust posture if the user's heart rate is below a certain level, if the user's stress is below a certain level, if the user's focus is high, any combination thereof, or the like.

[0436] Referring to FIG. **40**, an example of a method **1700** of a processor determining whether or not to disturb a user's generally positive state is shown. The flowchart describes the method **1700** in terms of sensing a posture, determining if a user's posture requires adjustment, and then determining whether or not to disturb the user based on whether the user is in a flow state or not, but is equally applicable to any determination that a user needs to be disturbed or any generally positive state as described herein. At decision block **1702**, the method **1700** includes determining if a user's posture requires adjustment. If the answer to decision block **1702** is NO, then the method **1700** repeats decision block **1702**. If the answer to decision block **1702** is YES, then the method proceeds to decision block **1704**. At decision block **1704**, the method **1700** includes the processor determining if the user is in a flow state. If the answer to decision block **1704** is YES, then the method **1700** can return to decision block **1702**. If the answer to decision block **1704** is NO, then the method **1700** can proceed to process block **1706**. At process block **1706**, the method **1700** can include actuating one or more aspects of the chair assembly that are expected to provoke an adjustment of the user's posture to a more ideal posture. Instead of actuating the chair assembly, the method **1700** can notify the user that the user's posture is not ideal and should be adjusted.

[0437] The chair assembly can include an on-board commissioning feature, where a user can identify preferred operational parameters for the chair by using a button, touch screen or other interface device mounted on the chair assembly itself. For example, a user can prompt the chair assembly to enter into the commissioning feature by pressing or holding a user interface, such as a button or a touch screen. An optical or audio indicator could then indicate to the user that the commissioning feature is active. The user could then set a preferred positioning of one or more aspects of the chair assembly, such as height of the seat, height of the arm rests, tension in the recline of the backrest, or the like. In another aspect, the user could set a preferred temperature for the heating function by pressing one button or location on a touch screen that raises the temperature or another button or location on a touch screen that lowers the temperature.

[0438] In another aspect, the user could set preferred heating locations. In one variation, the user could cycle through a set of pre-set heating locations by pressing a button or a location on a touch screen. In another variation, the user could activate individual heat application modules by selecting them on a touch screen. In yet another variation, if the chair assembly has a continuous heat application module, such as a smart fabric that applies heat at selective locations or a heating pad with very small heating elements, the user could activate chosen heating application locations by selecting and deselecting them on a touch screen.

[0439] In certain aspects, the chair assembly **10** can sense a changed property in the user or in the environment and can notify the user of the changed property. The notification can

be a prompt for the user to utilize the commissioning feature (i.e., re-commissioning the chair assembly 10) in order to make sure the user's preferred operational parameters are set for varying user or environmental stated. For instance, if the chair assembly 10 senses that the environmental temperature is higher or lower than when the user commissioned the chair, the chair assembly could notify the user that the temperature is different and prompt the user to commission the chair at the new temperature or at least query if the user would like to re-commission the chair. For example, if the user commissions the chair during a Winter month, the chair could prompt a user to re-commission the chair on the first warm day of Spring, the first hot day of Summer, or the day that the facility changes from heating to air conditioning.

[0440] In an aspect, if the user commissions the chair when the user weighs a first weight and the user then gains or loses weight to weigh a second weight, the chair assembly 10 could notify the user that the chair was commissioned at the first weight and prompt the user to re-commission the chair for the second weight. For example, if a user commissions the chair at a weight of 200 lbs. and then loses 30 lbs. to weigh 170 pounds, the chair could prompt the user through a visual, audio, or haptic cue to re-commission the chair at the new weight. The user could then re-commission the chair, indicate through a user interface that the user does not wish to re-commission the chair at this time, which may cause the chair to remind the user again after some period of time, or that the user does not wish to re-commission the chair.

[0441] In some aspects, the extent of the commissioning process for a chair assembly 10 can be tailored to a particular user or category of user. The commissioning process can be more extensive for a user that is designated as a repeat user or that is anticipated to be a repeat user by selection algorithm. The commissioning process can be less extensive for a user that is designated a less frequent user or that is anticipated to be a less frequent user by a selection algorithm. For instance, in a conference facility environment, a conference room chair could have a thorough commissioning process for an employee of the conference facility, but could have a less extensive commissioning process for an attendee at a conference that is being hosted at the conference facility.

[0442] The selection algorithm could identify one or more properties of the user, such as distance a user resides from the facility, the number of times a user has accessed the facility over a certain time period, the user's job credentials, and the like, then weight those properties based on a programmed or learned set of priorities, and determine the probability that a user will be a repeat user or a less frequent user.

[0443] In another aspect, the extent of the commissioning process for a chair assembly 10 can be tailored to the intended use of the chair. For example, a chair assembly 10 that is intended for use in a single-occupant office could have a thorough commissioning process, because a single user is likely to be a repeated user of the chair assembly 10, while a chair assembly that is intended for use in a conference room could have a very brief commissioning process, because multiple users are likely to occupy the chair assembly.

[0444] As described elsewhere herein, a user's attentiveness, need for a break, productivity, flow, or combination of these can be continuously monitored. Based on this moni-

toring, a commissioning or re-commissioning prompt may be delivered at a time when it is determined that prompting the user is not likely to disrupt productivity. For example, if a user's flow is being monitored, and it is determined that commissioning or re-commissioning of the chair assembly 10 would be beneficial at a time when a user is in a flow state, the chair assembly 10 could wait until the user emerges from the flow state before prompting the user to commission or re-commission the chair assembly 10.

[0445] Because the chair assembly 10 in many instances is utilized to improve productivity, and because constantly interrupting a user with prompts to re-commission the chair assembly 10 would likely decrease productivity, the chair assembly 10 can have a minimum time interval between prompts to re-commission the chair assembly 10. In some aspects, this minimum time interval could be one day, two days, one week, fifteen days, three weeks, one month, or more.

[0446] The chair assembly 10 can include a feature that enables a user to prevent the acquisition of data using the sensors described herein. For example, the chair assembly 10 can include a switch labeled "PREVENT DATA ACQUISITION" in a first position and "ALLOW DATA ACQUISITION" in a second position. When the switch is in the first position, the chair assembly 10 is prevented from acquiring data from the sensors. When the switch is in the second position, the chair assembly 10 can acquire data from the sensors.

[0447] The chair assembly 10 can include a feature that enables a user to prevent transmission of data from the chair assembly 10. For example, the chair assembly 10 can include a switch labeled "PRIVACY" or "PREVENT DATA TRANSMISSION" in a first position and "SHARING" or "ALLOW DATA TRANSMISSION" in a second position. When the switch is in the first position, the chair assembly 10 is prevented from sharing data with a facility-based processor or other outside users. When data is prevented from being shared, it can still be used for on-board processing. For example, if data is not being shared, the chair assembly 10 can still measure the ambient temperature and apply heat to a user. When the switch is in the second position, the chair assembly 10 can transmit data to outside users. In some aspects, when the switch is in the first position, the chair assembly 10 is still able to share data with an individual user's devices or computers.

[0448] These switches can be in the form of a virtual switch that is activated/deactivated by a touch screen located on the chair assembly 10. These switches can be a voice-responsive switch. For example, a user can say "Chair, stop acquiring/transmitting data" to prevent data acquisition/transmission and "Chair, start acquiring/transmitting data" to resume data acquisition/transmission. In embodiments having more than a simple switch, the user can be selective about which data is acquired or transmitted. For example, using a touch screen or voice-responsive switch, a user can select to acquire or transmit data relating to occupancy, but can select to not acquire or not transmit data relating to the user's weight.

[0449] The chair assembly 10 can record a user's preferences and "learn" which settings a user prefers. For instance, if a user manually adjusts the application of heat in response to a particular ambient temperature, the processor 58 can "learn" this behavior and begin automatically adjusting the application of heat in response to the particular ambient

temperature. As another example, if the chair assembly **10** and system as a whole senses that a user is repeatedly less alert after lunch, the chair assembly **10** might “learn” this and start providing additional stimuli to the user in the early afternoon.

[0450] The chair assembly **10** can include software that predicts certain settings for the user based on historical data regarding the preferences of other individuals. In some aspects, a chair assembly processor **58** can be programmed with a predictive software. The predictive software can result from an analysis of historical data. For example, the data may show that all users that are taller than six feet prefer one setting and all users that are shorter than six feet prefer a different setting. The characteristics of the user are set as variables in the historical data analysis and those variables are fit to the historically preferred settings for users. The predictive software can be updated as more data becomes available, either by user initiation or automatic updating. The predictive software can also be run remote from the chair assembly **10**. In at least some cases, predictions may be used as defaults or automatic parameter settings to be used when a particular user has not already specified preferences.

[0451] In some aspects, a touch screen **1684** can be located in an armrest of an arm assembly. Referring to FIG. **41**, the top surface **55** of the armrest **53** can be divided into two areas: a back portion **1686** where the elbow rests; and a front portion **1688** where the forearm rests. The back portion **1686** can be padded for a user’s comfort. The front portion **1688** can be a touch screen **1684** for enhanced functionality. In some aspects, the touch screen **1684** can initially be inactive, so that the user does not accidentally perform an action on the touch screen while resting her forearms. The touch screen **1684** can then be activated by a specific user signal input to the touch screen **1684**, such as a double- or triple-tap, by a voice command, such as “touch screen on”, or by other activation means. The touch screen **1684** can be configured to recognize the difference between a touch from a user’s forearm and a touch from a user’s hand. The touch screen **1684** can then revert to an inactive state after being unused for a certain period of time. The touch screen **1684** can display a message **1690**, such as “Commissioning of chair recommended. Double-tap here to initiate commissioning sequence.” The touch screen **1684** can provide the functionality described herein with respect to a user interface. It should be appreciated that the armrest **53** and touch screen **1684** are not limited to the shapes that are illustrated.

[0452] In certain aspects, the touch screen **1684** can provide a user interface for standalone functionality of the chair assembly **10**. In certain aspects, the touch screen **1684** can serve as a remote terminal for a user device. For example, if a user links their smart phone to the touch screen **1684**, the user could answer calls, send text messages, and the like from the touch screen **1684** serving as a remote terminal for the smart phone. In some aspects, one or both armrests **53** can include a touch screen **1684**. In some aspects, only one armrest **53** has a touch screen and both armrests **53** have the same physical dimensions and orientations, and can be swapped, so that a right-handed user can have a touch screen **1684** in the right armrest and a left-handed user can have a touch screen **1684** in the left armrest, or vice versa if so preferred.

[0453] In some aspects, the sensing of one or more attributes of a user as described herein can be performed by a wearable device, such as a smart watch, a badge, a pin, a bracelet, a necklace, etc.

[0454] A wearable device can be utilized to sense temperature, proximity to objects including the chair assembly, heart rate, breathing rate, blood oxygen levels, stress, perspiration, movement, identity, muscle activity, alertness, emotional state, galvanic skin response, and the like. For example, a smart watch can sense a user’s heart rate, blood oxygen levels, and galvanic skin response.

[0455] In some aspects, the processing functions described herein can be performed on a user’s portable device or wearable device. For example, a user’s portable smart phone device can receive data from one or more sensors as described herein, deduce a user’s stress, flow, fatigue, need for a break, alertness, or the like, and can notify a user. Also, the user’s portable device can deduce these things and can automatically cause a change in the status of one or more aspects of a chair assembly. For example, if the device deduces that the user is fatigued, the device could cause a haptic actuator in the chair to vibrate the chair in a fashion that stimulates an awakening action. As another example, if the device deduces that the user is stressed, the device may cause an olfactory actuator to release a calming aroma or could cause a heating element to apply heat to a portion of the user’s body that is medically known to reduce stress. If the device deduces that the user needs a break, the device could alert the user and recommend that the user take a break.

[0456] In some aspects, the control of data related to the chair assembly **10** might be user controllable through a software application on a personal device. In this way, a user can either opt out or opt in to sharing certain kinds of data. A user’s data privacy settings can follow the user from one chair assembly **10** to another chair assembly **10**, without requiring additional opt in or out selections. For example, referring to FIG. **43**, an app **1712** shown on a user’s device screen **1714** could have multiple privacy settings for certain kinds of data. As an example, referring to FIG. **38**, the app **1712** has three privacy settings, a “Do Not Share” setting **1716** for the right column which indicates data that will not be shared, a “Share w/Facility” setting **1718** for the middle column which indicates data that will be shared with the facility, but not with the manufacturer, and a “Share w/Facility & Manufacturer” setting **1720** for the left column which indicates data that will be shared with the facility and the manufacturer. In the example shown in FIG. **43**, the user has selected to share maintenance data, power management data, and chair alignment data with the facility and manufacturer, has selected to share temperature data, user flow data, user posture data, and occupancy data with the facility, and has selected not to share user weight data. In certain applications, a facility administrator can override the user’s preferences for one or more kinds of data. In certain applications, when a facility administrator can override a user’s preferences, the user can still have the ability to opt out of data sharing entirely. In some aspects, data shared with the manufacturer or the facility can be anonymous. In some aspects, anonymity is a user preference set within the app **1712**. Other options for entities to share data with include, but are not limited to, a health care provider, a health insurance provider, a health rewards service, an individual of the user’s choosing, such as a spouse, an educational insti-

tution, a governmental agency, a non-governmental organization, scientific research organizations, a social media site, and the like.

[0457] The chair assembly **10** can provide data for a user that can be compared with other users in a facility, a workgroup, a company, or any other group of users. Researchers have discovered that reporting energy usage of a person's neighbors can have positive impacts on a person's energy efficiency performance. A similar concept can be applied with the data acquired from the chair assembly **10** described herein. For example, if a user's flow is sensed by the chair assembly, the chair assembly **10** can provide a report at daily, weekly, or monthly intervals, or any other time interval comparing the amount of time a user spends achieving flow to others within a group. After receiving a report, a user might be more motivated to take active steps toward increasing the amount of time during the workday that is spent achieving flow. Similarly, if a user that typically sits with poor posture receives a report indicating that the average person in their work environment spends a large percentage of time sitting with excellent posture, it might motivate the user to strive to sit with better posture. By generating and delivering these reports to users, a facility or company might be able to prompt an improvement in work performance.

[0458] In still other cases, a system may present posture, flow or other progress reports to a user to show how that user's characteristics change over time. For instance, where a user initially has poor posture but continually makes changes that lead to better posture over time, the progression from poor toward excellent posture may be reported to the user periodically. Similarly, a regression in sensed posture may be indicated to a user. Increases and decreases in flow efficiency over time may also be reported to a chair user. Other health trends that may be periodically reported include heart rate, temperature, weight, alertness, fidgetiness, degree of movement, etc.

[0459] As described above, chair assembly **10** can go through a re-commissioning procedure when the chair assembly **10** senses that one or more ambient properties is change relative to the ambient property during the initial commissioning procedure. The re-commissioning prompt can be delivered via a wearable device, such as a smart watch or a earpiece. The re-commissioning prompt can be delivered via a portable device, such as a smart phone, a tablet, or the like. In addition, the determination regarding the need for re-commissioning can also be made on the device. For example, the device can receive data relating to the environmental or user conditions, can process the data through a decision-making algorithm, and can make recommendations for re-commissioning when certain conditions are met.

[0460] A device can utilize the chair assembly **10** in concert with other affordances in a space to alter a user's condition or integrated experience. For example, if the system determines that a user is not currently in a flow state, the system can prompt the alteration of the lighting, sound, temperature, and other aspects of the environment using other affordances, while actuating the positioning of the chair assembly **10**, actuating the temperature of the chair assembly **10**, or any other actuating of the chair assembly **10** that is known to promote a flow state. Similarly, the device can alter the environment using other affordances and can alter the chair assembly **10** to promote reduced stress,

increased productivity, increased focus, increased social behavior, improved collaboration, more or less user movement, and the like.

[0461] As described elsewhere herein, the chair assembly **10** can perform functions based on data received from remote sensors. Remote sensors can include, but are not limited to, a camera, a wearable device, a swallowed sensor, an injected sensor, an implanted sensor, or the like.

[0462] Referring to FIG. **14**, a camera **100**, **102** can monitor certain aspects of a user seated in a chair assembly **10**. A camera can be used to monitor a user's posture by acquiring images and processing the images via a posture-assessment algorithm known to those having ordinary skill in the art. A camera can also be used to monitor a user's breathing rate by monitoring the motion within a user's chest cavity or abdomen. A camera can further be used to monitor a user's movement by monitoring the motion of all parts of a user's body. A camera can be used to monitor a user's heart rate by monitoring the slight movement of the skin near the jugular vein, by monitoring slight variations in retinal reflections, or the like. A camera can be used to monitor a user's facial expressions using facial expression recognition software known to those having ordinary skill in the art. A camera can be used to monitor a user's eye movement by using eye movement tracking algorithms known to those having ordinary skill in the art. A thermal camera can be used to monitor a user's surface temperature. A camera can identify a user using facial recognition technology. A camera can identify a user that is wearing a non-visible emitter, such as an infrared emitter, by acquiring an image that is sensitive to the non-visible emission from the non-visible emitter.

[0463] As described above, for certain types of sensors, the sensing capability is particularly good where a sensor surface makes direct contact with some part of an employee's body. For this reason, certain parts of a table top or work surface are particularly advantageous for supporting sensor devices. Referring again to FIG. **21**, table top sensor devices **512** should be located immediately adjacent or even within an edge portion of a table top so that an employee's wrists can rest thereon and make direct contact therewith during keyboard operation. As shown, in at least some particularly useful embodiments, two direct touch sensors are provided in the top surface of table assembly **32** where a small gap exists between the two sensors. Each of the separate table top mounted sensors should be capable of independently sensing a user's physiological parameters (e.g., heart rate, temperature, etc.). Referring still to FIG. **21**, in some cases the table associated sensors have a length dimension between three inches and ten inches each to accommodate different users that may position their hands/wrists differently during keyboard operation. Each sensor **512** in the table top should be within one quarter to two inches of an adjacent table edge and should have a width dimension between one inch and four inches to accommodate different positions of user wrists on the table top surface.

[0464] In at least some cases top surfaces of the sensors **512** in the table top may be substantially flush with the top surface of the table assembly **32**. In other cases the sensors may stand proud of the table top so that they offer elevated wrist support to a station user. In still other cases the table associated sensors **512** in FIG. **21** may comprise wrist support structure independent of the table top.

[0465] Keyboard 510 in FIG. 21 also includes a pair of direct touch sensor devices 512 that may have characteristics similar to the characteristics of the table top associated sensors described above. Thus, each keyboard sensor has a length dimension to accommodate different wrist locations and may either be substantially flush with adjacent board surfaces or may stand proud to offer additional wrist support.

[0466] A system camera may also be integrated into other space affordances. For instance, in some cases a system camera or other type of sensor device may be integrated into a desk lamp or other lamp structure. To this end, see the exemplary lamp structure 1898 shown in FIG. 44 that includes a base 1900, a support arm 1902 and a light head member 1904 where a camera is mounted within the head structure at 1906. Here, the camera 1910 may be mounted to swivel about the head structure so that the camera can be optimally placed at a location in front of a user with the user's head or torso generally located in the field of view of the camera.

[0467] In still other cases, a system camera may be mounted to a monitor support arm structure, to a credenza, a shelf member or a partition wall or architectural wall structure immediately in front of a location at which a user typically works. In at least some cases a camera device including a wireless transceiver may be retrofittable to a system including a chair and other components so that a user can position the camera at any optimal location relative to the user.

[0468] In still other cases a user may be able to sync her smart phone which includes a camera to her system so that a smart phone camera can obtain images useable by a system processor to perform many of the parameter analyzing steps. In this case, a smart phone camera could obtain useful images of the user and a display screen on the same smart phone device could present feedback to the user. For instance, the phone camera images may be used to determine a user's heart rate and that rate may be reported back to the user via the phone screen as well as being used for some other purpose (e.g., an overall wellness assessment of the user and to provide posture or other suggestions, to control chair actuators to change posture automatically, etc.).

[0469] A swallowed sensor can be used to monitor a user's core temperature. The core temperature data can then be used by the chair assembly 10 to actuate heating or cooling elements, as described herein. The swallowed sensor can communicate wirelessly with a processor that utilizes the data acquired by the swallowed sensor in one or more of the ways described herein.

[0470] An implanted sensor can be used to monitor a user's core temperature, surface temperature, heart rate, breathing rate, brain activity, muscle activity, blood oxygenation, blood sugar levels, and the like. In some aspects, the implanted sensor can be powered by a user's blood stream. In some aspect, the implanted sensor can be powered by a battery that is recharged using wireless recharging. In some aspects, the implanted sensor can be powered by a communication signal.

[0471] Data gathered from sensors in the chair assembly, from a wearable device, from a user's portable device, or from the remote sensors described herein, can be collectively used by a processor to derive a property or state of a user that cannot be directly measured or is more efficient to

derive than to directly measure. For instance, given a sufficient number of inputs, a user's flow state can be derived.

[0472] If multiple users are using multiple chair assemblies 10 as described herein, a processor can receive data from the multiple chair assemblies 10 and make a determination as to the state of collaboration of the users. For example, the processor can receive proximity and orientation data from sensors within a set of chair assemblies 10 or a remote sensor that is sensing the set of chair assemblies, and if the chair assemblies 10 are within a certain distance of one another and generally facing one another, then the processor could begin assessing the state of collaboration. For example, if the processor receives data indicating that a single person is dominating the conversation in a collaborative environment, then the processor might score the interaction at a low level of collaboration. If the processor receives data indicating that the conversation is moving freely about the group in the collaborative environment, then the processor might score the interaction at a high level of collaboration. As another example, the processor could receive data relating to how the users in the collaborative environment are seated relative to one another and determine the state of collaboration as a result. This collaborative assessment can be based on the best available scientific knowledge relating to the study of collaborative working environments.

[0473] The chair assembly 10 can be an integrated part of a network of smart devices. In such a network, the chair assembly 10 can serve as a storage point for a user's individual preferences for the chair assembly 10, as well as the user's individual preferences for the other smart devices. In the alternative, a user's preferences may be stored in a remote system database so that the preferences can be accessed and used to customize automatic control of any chair used by a specific user that has controllable features. Thus, for instance, where an employee works in many different enterprise facilities and therefore uses many different chairs, each controllable chair can be controlled in a fashion that best meets the user's preferences.

[0474] In at least some cases it is contemplated that a smart phone or other portable computing device that includes a processor and wireless communication capabilities may provide most if not all of the processing power required to operate a smart chair assembly including sensors, actuators and other components. While many different types of portable devices may be used to drive a smart chair assembly, an exemplary smart phone device will be described in the following example. Here, a smart chair assembly may include several sensors and actuators as described above for sensing a user's physiological parameters and for adjusting chair assembly components to meet user preferences, encourage healthy use of the chair assembly, or to encourage any other type of activity. The chair assembly would also include a transceiver (see 1692 in FIG. 42) for wirelessly communicating with a smart phone device. In the present example it will be assumed that a chair assembly application can be downloaded to a smart phone where the application is designed to work with the chair assembly to perform various tasks and functions.

[0475] In order to interact with a chair assembly, a smart phone and the smart phone application have to be associated with the chair in some way. One particularly useful way to associated a smart phone with a specific chair assembly is to

use the phone to identify the specific chair assembly and associate with the identified chair assembly automatically. For instance, most smart phones include a camera that can be used to take an image of a bar code, dot matrix code, QR code, or some other type of code (hereinafter a “chair code”). In these cases, a chair code that uniquely identifies a specific chair assembly may be attached to a chair and the camera may be used to take an image of the chair code which can then be used to identify the specific chair. In at least some cases it is contemplated that a remote database may store chair codes associated with specific virtual addresses so that each specific chair code corresponds to a specific virtual address that can be used to communicate with the chair assembly.

[0476] In at least some cases it is contemplated that obtaining an image of a chair code on a chair may cause a smart phone to automatically download and access a chair control application so that the chair user does not have to download the application in a separate step. In other cases, the chair user may have to first download the chair control application and then obtain an image of the chair code from within the application to associate the phone with the specific smart chair assembly.

[0477] In other cases where a smart phone includes a near field RF or other ID reader, an RF or other type of identification tag may be attached to the smart chair and that tag may be read periodically to associate the chair and the smart phone. For instance, here, the association may be made automatically when the smart phone is initially proximate the chair and may be reconfirmed every few seconds. Here, when any system sensor (e.g., a pressure sensor, a camera, etc.) senses that the user has left the chair (e.g., a user stands up), the association may be discontinued or the action may cause the smart phone to attempt to re-associate with the chair.

[0478] Once a smart phone is associated with a specific smart chair assembly, in at least some embodiments the chair assembly can simply be used by the user and various processes may commence automatically. For instance, as a user adjusts the chair actuators, the adjustments may be transmitted to the smart phone to be memorialized. As sensors in the chair sense different postures and other physiological parameters, the sensed parameter values may be transmitted to the phone for archiving or other processing. When an unhealthy posture or some other condition that is not optimal is sensed, the smart phone can provide messages to the chair user via a display on the smart phone device to encourage better posture or some other action to optimize parameters. Where actuators in the chair can be automatically controlled, the smart phone may present control signals thereto to automatically adjust parameters in an attempt to achieve some positive goal (e.g., better posture, relieve perceived or indicated pain, cause healthy repositioning of the chair user periodically, etc.).

[0479] In cases where chairs are assigned to single users or are routinely used by single users over at least some period, the smart phone application can be used to at least semi-automatically re-associate with the assigned chair each time the user uses the chair. For instance, after a smart phone is associated with a specific chair, if the user leaves the chair at the end of a day and then comes back to that chair the next day, when the user sits in the chair and a pressure sensor in the chair recognizes that someone is occupying the chair, a chair processor may broadcast a signal including a chair

identifier which is received by the smart phone application. Here, the smart phone application may recognize that some user is occupying the chair and may request that the user obtain another image of the chair code to re-associate the phone with the chair.

[0480] In other cases when the user sits in a chair, sensed user parameters may be used to at least partially identify the user and then to associate the chair and the specific user’s smart phone. For instance, in a simple case, once a user uses a chair and the chair is associated with the user’s smart phone a first time, the user’s weight as sensed by the chair may be stored for re-association. The next time the user sits in the chair, the chair may sense user weight and use that as a simple identifier to identify the user and attempt to associate the chair with the user’s smart phone application to enable smart phone control of the chair.

[0481] In still other cases where a location tracking system is capable of locating user smart phones and other portable devices as well as smart chairs and other affordances in an enterprise space, the locations of user smart phones and chair assemblies may be used to associate and then re-associate smart phones and chairs. For instance, in at least some cases when a user’s smart phone is not already associated with a specific chair assembly, the smart phone application may be programmed to routinely query for smart chair assemblies in a small area (e.g., an 8 foot radius). When a smart chair assembly is identified and the chair assembly generates a signal indicating that a user occupies the chair (e.g., a pressure sensor identifies that a user sat down), specific locations of the chair assembly and the user’s smart phone device may be determined and, if the chair and smart phone locations are within some predefined threshold distance of each other, the application may automatically associate the phone with the chair. Here, re-association would be performed in substantially the same manner.

[0482] In some cases the smart phone may either provide a commissioning option to the user or may automatically initiate a commissioning option the first time the phone is associated with the smart chair or any smart chair. In some cases the commissioning process may be extremely simple such as, for instance, having the user set preferred chair settings (e.g., temperature, height, seat depth, lumbar support, force required for backrest to recline, etc.) to preferred settings and then storing the settings so that the settings can be subsequently used to automatically set parameters for the user in the future. In other cases more complex commissioning processes are contemplated.

[0483] In some cases a commissioning procedure may cause a smart chair assembly to cycle through different parameter settings and may request feedback from a user for at least a subset of the parameter settings. For instance, regarding heat settings, where a chair assembly includes several heat elements that can be independently controlled to apply heat to different locations on a seat and/or a backrest assembly, the heat elements may first be controlled to cycle through different heat patterns, holding each pattern for 20 minutes unless a user affirmatively indicates a desire to move on to a next pattern. At the end of each 20 minute period, a system processor (e.g. in a smart phone, a remote server, etc.) may query the user to determine if the user liked or disliked the heat pattern. After all heat patterns have been tested, the system processor may store the preferred pattern or the top N preferred patterns for subsequent use with the

user. Continuing, the system may cycle through different heat levels using the preferred heat pattern(s) continuing to gather user preference information. Other chair parameter options may be automatically cycled through to obtain user preferences for subsequent use.

[0484] Where a smart phone application controls a smart chair assembly, the smart phone application may also be useable to control other devices or affordances proximate a smart chair in conjunction with the smart chair in some cases. For instance, a light device, speakers, a camera, a heating device, that are independent of the chair assembly may be controlled along with the chair assembly to control a chair user's environment in different ways. Here, in at least some cases it is contemplated that each other device or affordance that may be controlled by a phone application may include its own processor and transceiver for receiving control commands from the phone application. Here, in at least some cases, when a user initially associates a chair with a smart phone, separate steps may also be performed to associate the phone with other affordances in space including a light, speakers, a camera, etc.

[0485] In at least some cases it is contemplated that a phone application may be associated with other affordances in the same way that a smart chair is associated with the application. For instance, after obtaining an image of a chair code from a smart chair, images of similar codes on other affordances or resources may be obtained while in the smart phone control application. Each resource code may then be used to identify a virtual wireless address for an associated light, camera, etc., and a small network of devices may be formed, a sort of local internet of things (hereinafter a "local IOT"), to be controlled by the smart phone application. Here, for instance, if the smart phone application receives signals from the chair assembly or a networked camera that indicate that a chair user is losing focus, the application may cause a vibrator in the chair to vibrate and stimulate the chair user and at the same time increase intensity of light generated by a networked light device.

[0486] In at least some cases it is contemplated that resources may be added to or removed from a local IOT and the application will automatically change its operation as a function thereof. For instance, a user may only have a chair initially and a stimuli would, in that case, only be provided via the chair assembly. Thereafter, the user may take steps to associate a coded light device with the application and thereafter the application may provide stimuli via both the chair and the light device.

[0487] Consistent with the above aspects, see FIG. 45 that includes a chair assembly 10, a light device 2002, speakers 2004 and a high definition camera 2006 as well as a smart phone assembly 2008 to be used with the other components. Each of the chair assembly 10, light device 2002, speakers 2004 and camera 2006 includes a resource tag or code 2010, 2012, 2014 and 2016 that can be read or imaged via the smart phone camera to associate the phone and the affordances. Again, during a commissioning procedure, a user can obtain an image of code 2012 via the phone assembly 2008 causing the phone assembly to download and open up an affordance control application. The application may instruct the user to obtain images of other resource codes 2012, 2014 and 2016 to associate those resources with the application and the specific chair 10 to be used by the user. Thereafter, either a commissioning procedure may commence or the application may automatically start controlling

affordances in the local IOT according to any of the processes and methods described above. Subsequently, if the user wants to add another resource or device to the network for control purposes, the user can simply reaccess the application and obtain another image of a resource code causing the application to automatically change the control program to accommodate the added resource and take advantage of resource characteristics.

[0488] In still other cases a local IOT may be formed that is controlled by a local or system related computer or server without requiring a personal portable device after initial commissioning. For instance, referring again to FIG. 45 and also once again to FIG. 13, after a local IOT is created using smart phone 2008, the local IOT may be associated with a facility based processor 54 for control purposes. Here, processor 54 would receive signals via access points 69 or other receiver devices from chair sensors or other system sensors and would control the chair assembly and other resources associated with the local IOT as a function thereof. In still other cases, after resources are added to a local IOT, control thereof may be passed on to the chair assembly processor 58 shown in FIG. 13 so that the smart phone or other device is either out of the loop or only operates as a sensor or an output device.

[0489] Where a chair is routinely used by more than one user, preferences, posture profiles, local IOTs, and other user specific parameters for each user would be established during a commissioning procedure in at least some cases and would be used to facilitate user specific control. Thus, where a first user specifies a first local IOT and a second user specifies a second local IOT for a specific chair and proximate resources, a system processor (e.g., smart phone or facility based) would change the IOT as a function of the user specific local IOT.

[0490] In cases where a first user uses different chairs and proximate resources at different times (e.g., in the case of a user that "hotels" in different facility spaces at different times), user specific preferences, posture and pain signatures, local IOTs and other parameters may be automatically applied to different chair assemblies and proximate affordances in at least some embodiments. For instance, if a first user initially uses a first chair and proximate light device and camera for a three hour period and then moves to a different location and a second chair and proximate second light and second camera, the same parameters used to control the first chair, light device and camera may be used to control the second chair, light device and camera.

[0491] Association with the first chair and proximate affordances and then with the second chair and proximate affordances may be made in any of several different ways. For example, if a first user is the only person in an enterprise space (e.g., in an office or a conference room), when chair sensors for a specific chair generate signals indicating that someone sat in that chair, a system server or processor may be programmed to assume that the first user (e.g., the only person in the space) is the person that sat down and preferences and other parameters for that specific user may be applied. As another example, if first, second and third employees are located in a specific enterprise space and the first and second employees are already associated with first and second smart chair assemblies and associated proximate resource sets, if a third smart chair assembly generates sensor signals indicating that someone sat down in the chair, a system processor or server may be programmed to asso-

ciate the third employee and her preferences and other parameters with the third smart chair and proximate resources and to therefore apply those parameters to controlling the chair and associated resources. As still one other example, cameras and other tracking system devices (e.g., triangulating access points, proximity sensors, etc.) may be used to track specific user locations and automatically associate specific users and their associated preferences and other parameters with specific chair assemblies.

[0492] In at least some embodiments a system server or processor may first attempt to associate a smart chair and other proximate resources with a specific user and user's parameter set (e.g., preferences, posture and pain signatures, an IOT signature, etc.). In some of these cases, the server may resort to querying a user for confirmation of association only when association cannot be automatically established beyond some threshold level of confidence (e.g., 90 to 100% confidence level that association is correct). For instance if the system server can only establish association with a 50% confidence level that the association is intended, the server may query a user via a smart phone display screen or other display screen in the vicinity of the user to confirm which chair and other resources the user is using.

[0493] In at least some cases it is contemplated that upon association of a user's parameter set with a smart chair and/or other resources, some aspect of the chair or other resource may be controlled according to some convention that can be learned and known by all users as a confirmation of association. For instance, when a first user approaches a smart chair assembly and sits down in the chair, if a server or processor automatically associates the user's preference set with the chair, a vibrator device in the chair assembly may be automatically controlled to vibrate three times in rapid succession to confirm automatic association. In another case where a chair assembly includes a light device (e.g., an LED built into a lower surface of a support arm rest member), the light device may be pulsed on and off in rapid succession three times to generate an automatic association confirmation signal for the user to perceive. In still other cases a small speaker or other sound generating device on a chair may generate a sequence of three beeps or other sounds to indicate automatic association.

[0494] Other devices that are automatically included in a user's local IOT may generate perceivable automatic association signals as well including a light device (see again **2002** in FIG. **45**) which may flicker on and off or flicker to increase and decrease light intensity three times to indicate automatic association, speakers (see again **2004** in FIG. **45**) that may generate a sequence of three beeping sounds or a camera (see **2006** in FIG. **45**) that may include a built in LED **2020** or sound generating device **2022** to generate a three part visual or audio signal to indicate automatic association.

[0495] In particularly advantageous embodiments the signals used to indicate automatic association of different resources will be similar in all cases. For example, in some cases each associated device will generate a sequence of three beeps to indicate automatic association. In some cases the association signals generated by a set of devices in a local IOT will be controlled to automatically stagger the association signals so that a chair user can clearly distinguish one from the others. For instance, in the case of FIG. **45**, chair assembly **10** may generate a first sequence of three

beeps followed by light device **2002**, followed by speakers **2004** and finally followed by camera **2006**.

[0496] Above we describe how different people have different body characteristics and therefore that it is important in at least some embodiments to customize how a system server or processor perceives sensor signatures to specific smart chair assembly users. Thus, good posture for a first user may have a sensor signature that is substantially different than a good posture signature for a second user. Similarly, other conclusions that should be drawn from sensed parameter sets may be highly user specific. For instance, "flow" may be sensed differently for different chair and other resource users.

[0497] It has also been recognized that flow and perhaps other conclusions about user conditions may not be easy to simulate during a temporally defined commissioning procedure. Thus, where a commissioning procedure takes 15 minutes to complete, in most cases it will be difficult for a user to enter a flow state in that 15 minute period and hence allow a system to determine a flow signature of sensor values for that user.

[0498] To enable capture of a flow signature for a specific user, in at least some embodiments it is contemplated that the system will enable a user to indicate a flow state at any time. Here, for instance, if, while using a smart chair and other proximate resources, a user recognizes that she has been in a flow state for the last 30 minutes, the user may be able to indicate her perceived recent state in some fashion. When the perceived state is indicated, a system server may be programmed to look historically at sensed parameters over some previous period (e.g., the most recent 20 minutes) to establish a flow signature for the specific employee. The flow signature may then be stored for subsequent use in determining when the specific user is in a flow state.

[0499] Other state signatures may also be established for a system user including, for instance, an agitated state, a relaxed state, etc. Here, the system may enable a user to indicate any of several different states that the user perceives which would then be associated with sensor value sets obtained during a previous period (e.g., again a previous 20 minute period).

[0500] The disclosure describes particular embodiments, but one of skill in the art will appreciate that various modifications can be made without departing from the spirit of the disclosure. Thus, the invention is to cover all modifications, equivalents, and alternatives falling within the spirit and scope of the invention as defined by the following appended claims. For example, although the system is described above for use as furniture in an office environment, in some applications, the furniture can be used in medical applications, such as, for example, a table carrying surgical tools, a bed sensing and altering patient characteristics, and the like, or in a home environment, such as a sofa, a bed, a table, and the like. The furniture can also be used in waiting rooms, cafeterias, show rooms, classrooms, and various other locations.

[0501] To apprise the public of the scope of this invention, the following claims are made:

1. (canceled)
2. (canceled)
3. (canceled)
4. A non-transitory computer-readable medium having stored thereon computer executable instructions that, when executed by a processor, cause the processor to:

associate a first user with a furniture item, the furniture item including a first heating and/or cooling device; retrieve from a temperature control setting database a first temperature control setting for the first user; send instructions to the first heating and/or cooling device to execute the first temperature control setting while the first user is associated with the furniture item associate a second user with the furniture item; retrieve from the temperature control setting database a second temperature control setting for the second user; and send instructions to the first heating and/or cooling device to execute the second temperature control setting while the second user is associated with the furniture item.

5. A method comprising:
 receiving from a first user a first temperature control setting;
 receiving from a second user a second temperature control setting;
 associating the first user with a furniture item, the furniture item including a first heating and/or cooling device;
 retrieving the first temperature control setting;
 executing the first temperature control setting at the first heating and/or cooling device while the first user is associated with the furniture item;
 associating the second user with the furniture item;
 retrieving the second temperature control setting; and
 executing the temperature control setting at the first heating and/or cooling device while the second user is associated with the furniture item.

6. The method of claim **5**, wherein associating the first user or associating the second user comprises sensing proximity to the furniture item.

7. The method of claim **6**, wherein sensing proximity occurs via a mobile device.

8. The method of claim **5**, wherein associating the first user or associating the second user comprises inputting an authentication code associated with the furniture item.

9. The method of claim **5**, wherein the associating the first user or associating the second user comprises scanning an identification badge.

10. The method of claim **5**, wherein the associating the first user or associating the second user comprises biometric identification.

11. The method of claim **5**, wherein the associating the first user or associating the second user comprises a registration and/or login procedure.

12. The method of claim **5**, wherein the furniture item is a chair.

13. The method of claim **5**, the method further comprising:
 sensing occupancy of the furniture item; and
 deactivating the heating and/or cooling device when the furniture item is unoccupied.

14. A furniture item comprising:
 a heating and/or cooling device; and
 a processor configured to control the heating and/or cooling device, the processor configured to: associate a first user with the furniture item, retrieve a first temperature control setting associated with the first user, execute the first temperature control setting at the heating and/or cooling device while the first user is associated with the furniture item; associate a second user with the furniture item; retrieve a second temperature control setting associated with the second user; and execute the second temperature control setting at the heating and/or cooling device while the second user is associated with the furniture item.

15. The furniture item of claim **14**, wherein the processor is configured to associate the first user by determining that the first user is in proximity to the furniture item and/or to associate the second user by determining that the second user is in proximity to the furniture item.

16. The furniture item of claim **14**, the furniture item further comprising a temperature sensor configured to measure the temperature of the first or second user.

17. The furniture item of claim **16**, the processor configured to control the heating and/or cooling device in response to the temperature of the first or second user.

18. The furniture item of claim **14**, wherein the furniture item is a chair.

19. The furniture item of claim **14**, the furniture item further comprising a user interface.

20. The furniture item of claim **19**, wherein the processor is configured to associate the first user and/or associate the second user via the user interface.

21. The furniture item of claim **14**, wherein the furniture item includes an authentication code, wherein the processor is configured to associate the first user and/or associate the second user via scanning of the authentication code.

22. The furniture item of claim **14**, the furniture item further comprising a biometric authentication sensor.

23. The furniture item of claim **14**, the furniture item further comprising an occupancy sensor.

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